SONY PLAYSTATION • SEGA SATURN • NINTENDO 64 • PC • ARCADE • ANIME

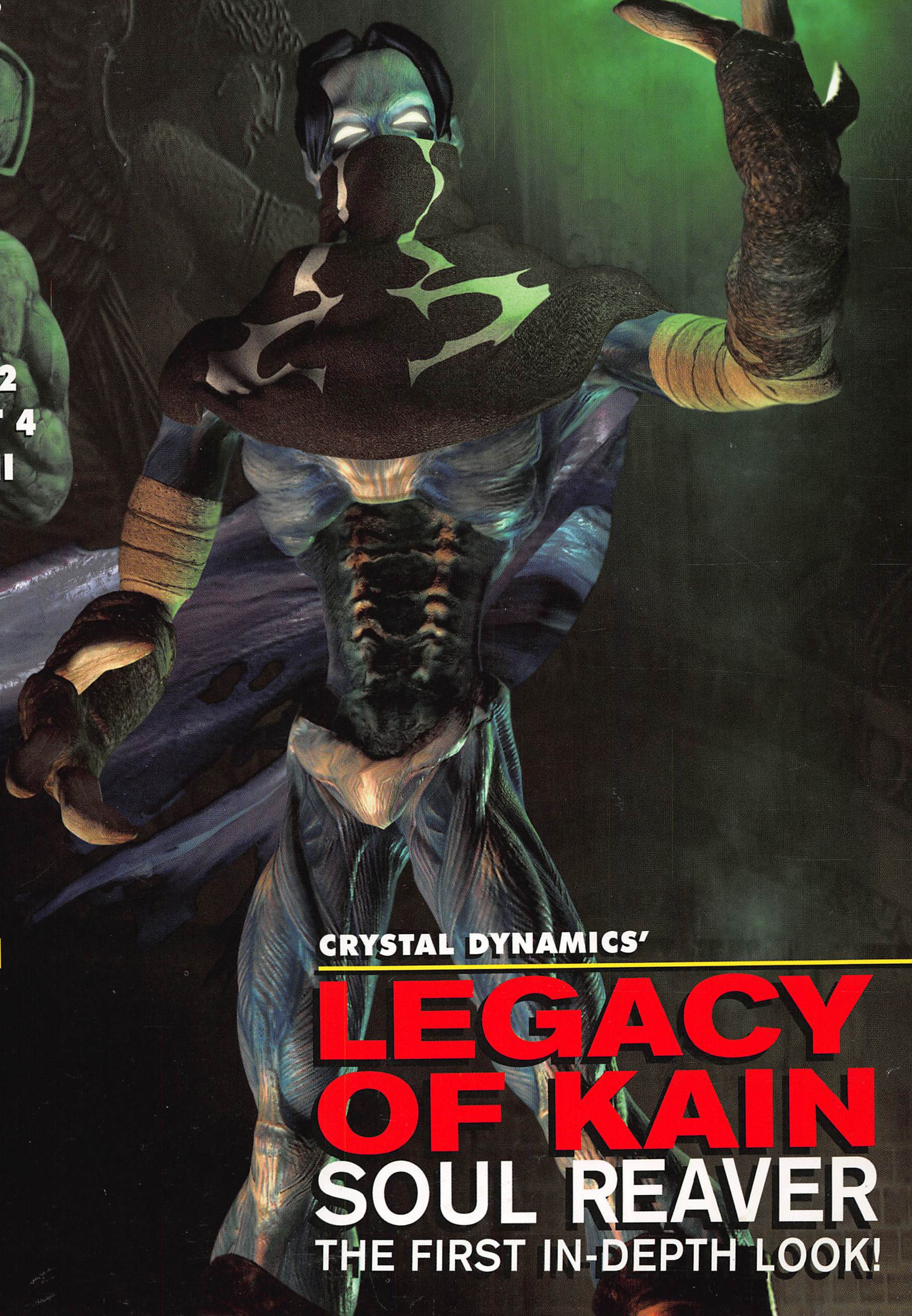
GAMEFAN

16 PAGES OF CODES!

THE LAST TRUE ENTHUSIAST MAGAZINE

VOLUME 6 • ISSUE 6

TENCHU
TEKKEN 3
G-DARIUS
VIGILANTE 8
PARASITE EVE
BANJO KAZOOIE
VAMPIRE SAVIOR
BUSHIDO BLADE 2
MORTAL KOMBAT 4
DRAGON FORCE II
DEAD OR ALIVE
SUPERMAN
FORSAKEN
NINJA



25 PAGES OF IMPORT COVERAGE!

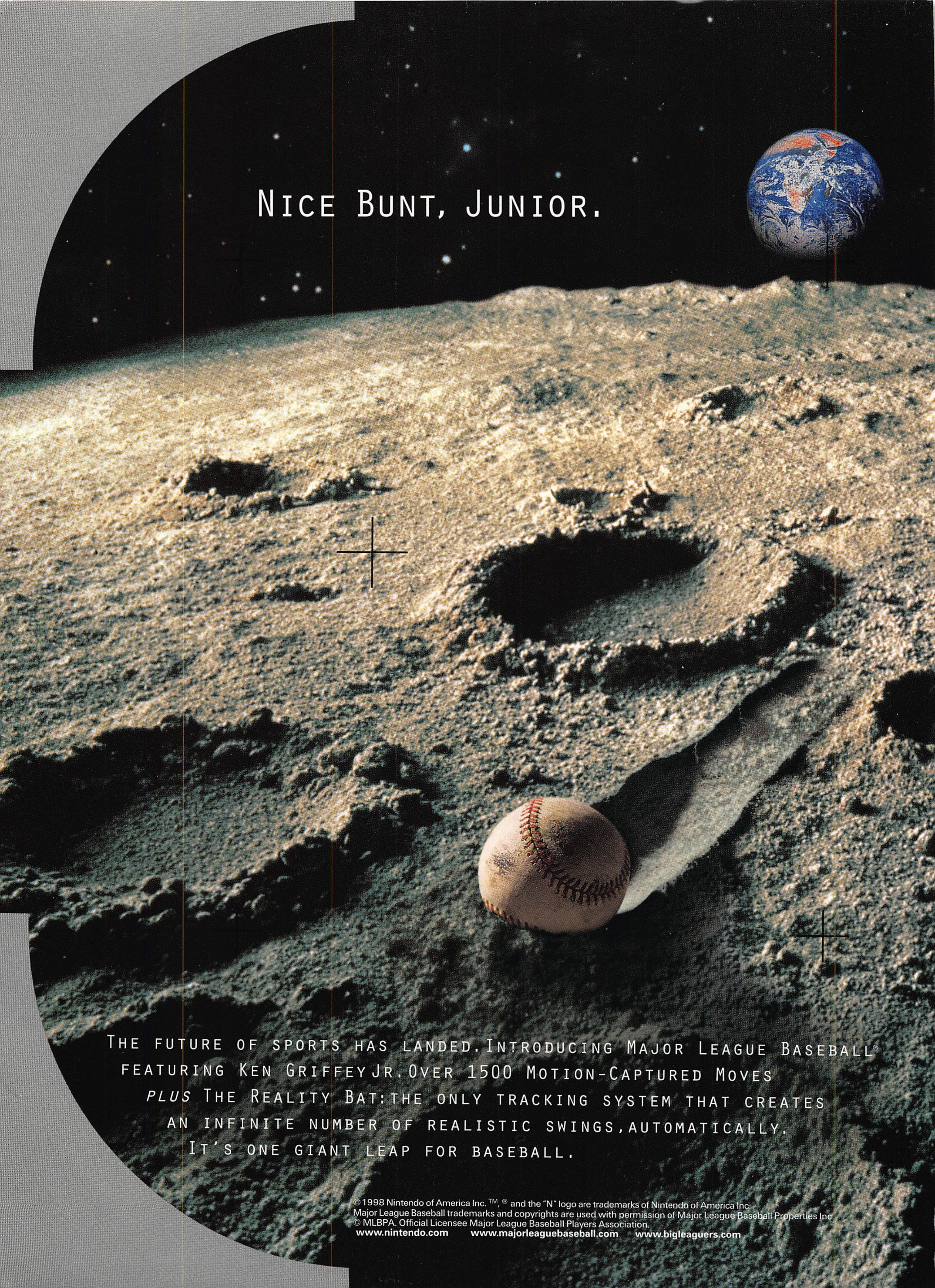
PC GAMEFAN
UNREAL
STARCRAFT
HALF-LIFE

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS'

LEGACY OF KAIN SOUL REAVER

THE FIRST IN-DEPTH LOOK!

$5.95 US • $7.95 CANADA


NICE BUNT, JUNIOR.
THE FUTURE OF SPORTS HAS LANDED. INTRODUCING MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL® FEATURING KEN GRIFFEY JR. OVER 1500 MOTION-CAPTURED MOVES *PLUS* THE REALITY BAT: THE ONLY TRACKING SYSTEM THAT CREATES AN INFINITE NUMBER OF REALISTIC SWINGS, AUTOMATICALLY.
IT'S ONE GIANT LEAP FOR BASEBALL.
© 1998 Nintendo of America Inc. ™, ® and the "N" logo are trademarks of Nintendo of America Inc.
Major League Baseball trademarks and copyrights are used with permission of Major League Baseball Properties Inc.
© MLBPA. Official Licensee Major League Baseball Players Association.
www.nintendo.com www.majorleaguebaseball.com www.bigleaguers.com


MAJOR LEAGUE Baseball
FEATURING
KEN GRIFFEY JR
PRESS START
NINTENDO 64
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PLAYERS CHOICE
WHAT A GAME.
SPORTS

Ed Zone



Keeping the mag in this condition is going to be entirely based on your feedback...

So what do you think of this issue? Not used to seeing such a thick mag in the middle of the year, eh? Well, we thought we'd give it a go and see what you think of it. We've received many complaints over the past few months that game mags are not thick enough this time of year and that you wanted more coverage on everything. So instead of scaling back other sections, we thickened up the mag and gave sections everything they were due. Keeping the mag in this condition is going to be entirely based on your feedback and whether or not we're moving in the right direction.

Beyond that, take a look at the long-awaited introduction of PC games in PC GameFan. We thought it was time they had their due, and to that end we've opened it up with *Unreal*, the hottest corridor game to come along since *Quake 2*, and looking to tear *Quake* a new, uh, well... you get the idea.

Among the many concerns we've heard from readers was the fact that, over the years, GameFan had moved away from what set us most apart from the 'other' print mags out there. Namely the fact that our import coverage has dwindled for quite some time. Well, we've rectified that oversight with more than 25 pages of pure gaming nirvana from the Land of the Rising Sun. Get set for the first review of Square's *Parasite Eve* as well as the first review of Capcom's *Vampire Savior* among many others. We fully intend to move GameFan back to its roots and this is only the first big step.

Oh, and for the Sega fans out there: We've heard your concerns through a TON of e-mail and letters on the fact that everybody seems to be turning their back on Saturn. Well, here and now I want to make it clear that even though the domestic Saturn coverage will be scaled back (that's out of our control, due to lack of domestic releases), we'll pick up the slack in the import section at least until Katana finds its legs. So never fear, like the Duo, 32X, and Sega CD before it, Saturn will get the coverage it deserves for the immediate future.

Beyond that, we haven't forgotten the domestic market—not at all. Take a gander at the first review of Nintendo's sure-to-be-a-million-seller, *Banjo and Kazooie*. As well, take a look at our cover feature on Crystal Dynamics' *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*. It's a phenomenal title that looks set to give *Metal Gear Solid* a real run for the title of PS game of the year.

Looking towards the future, we have a number of things in the works that will bring a big smile to your face. While I can't go into hard details, suffice it to say that you've only just started to feel the full force of the new GameFan—the first 6 years were only a warm-up... ECM

Team GameFan

Editor in Chief/Publisher
Jay Puryear
Creative Director
David White
Executive Editor
Eric Mylonas
Editor at Large
Todd Mowatt
Art Director
Bruce Stockert
Managing Editor
Robert Elmquist
Graphic Design/Layout
Frank Martinez Jr.
Nathanael "Spud" Stini-Lark
Mike Wakamatsu
Kim Tran
Editors
George Ngo
Anthony Chau
Brandon Justice
Copy Editor
George Ngo
Sr. Illustrator
Terry Wolfinger
Sports Editor
Geoff Higgins
Prepress Manager
Eric Walden
Director of IT
Tony Lee
Asst. Director of IT
Will Kalman
IT Support
Paul Brink
Online Director
Mark Krynsky
Online Graphic Artist
Mike Malloy
Jeremy Buttell

Director of Circulation
Alan Powers

For advertising inquiries only:
Jay Puryear
(818) 706-3260/Fax: (818) 706-1367
E-Mail:apowers@metropolismedia.com

AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS
ABC AUDIT & MEMBERSHIP APPLIED FOR
BPA INTERNATIONAL
BPA AUDIT & MEMBERSHIP APPLIED FOR
ISSN# 1092-7212

Metropolis Staff

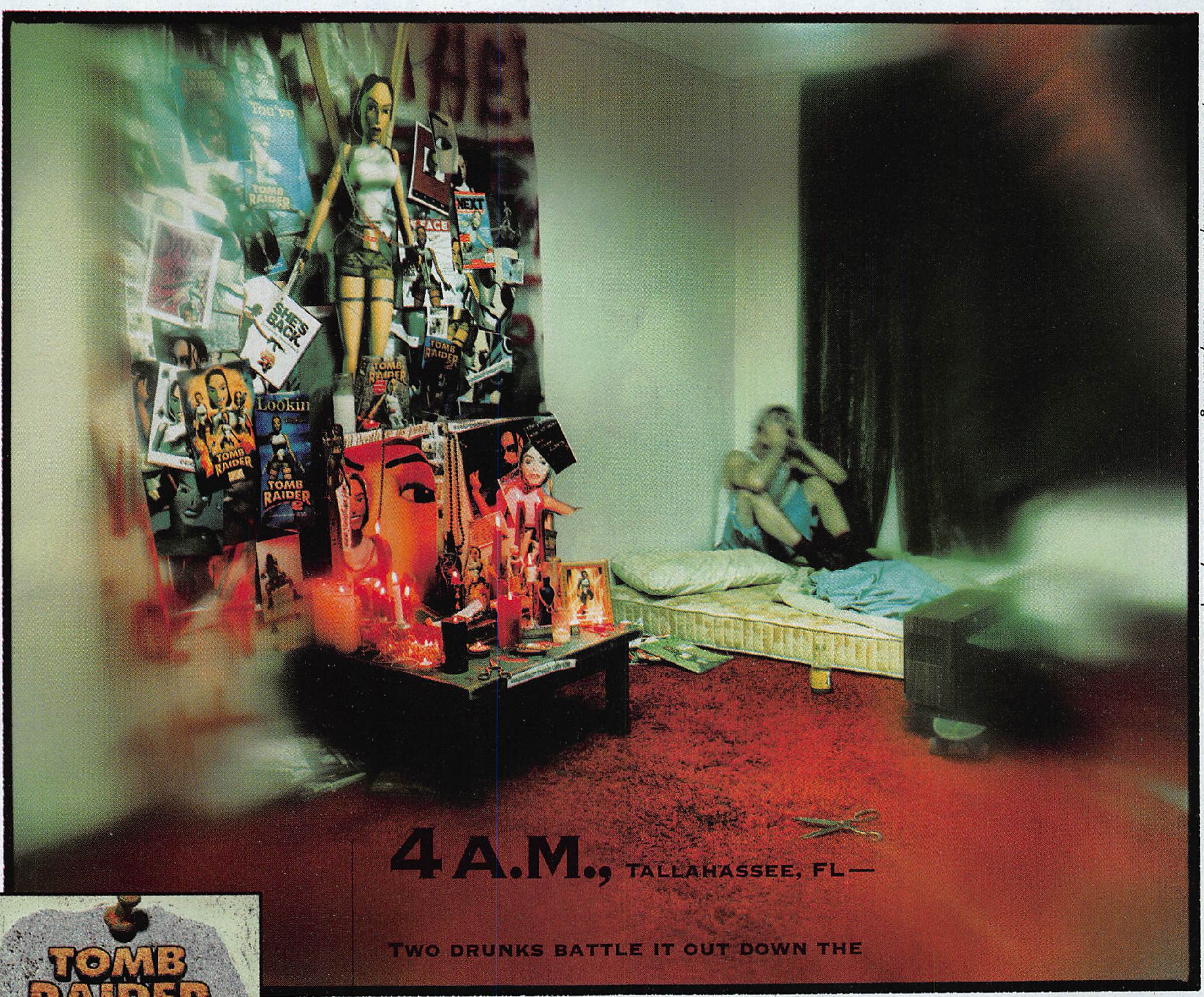
Chief Executive Officer
David Bergstein
VP/Group Publisher Gaming
Jay Puryear
Director of Human Resources
Conrad S. Frankowski
Assistant to the CEO
Frymi Biedak
Accounting Mangaer
Kendal Snyder
Retail Distribution
Irwin Billman
Ralph Perricelli-MCC
Office Manager
Elaine Schings

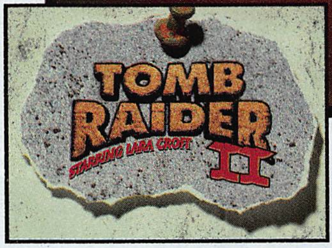
A METROPOLIS PUBLICATION

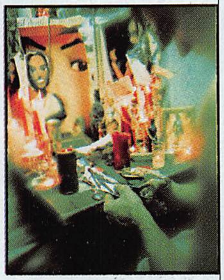
GameFan (ISSN#: 1092-7212) Volume 6 Issue 6 June 1998. Published monthly by Metropolis Publications, Inc. 530 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 400, Santa Monica, California 90401. One year subscription (12 issues) is $24.99. Foreign and Canada add $10 per year. Please remit in U.S. funds only. Please allow 60 days for your first issue. Periodical Postage Rates Paid at Los Angeles, CA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send change of address form to: GameFan, P.O. Box 469084, Escondido, Ca. 92046-9084

MADE IN THE USA







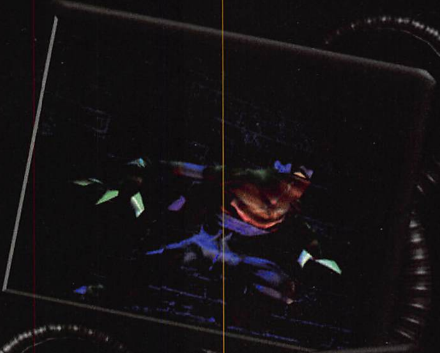


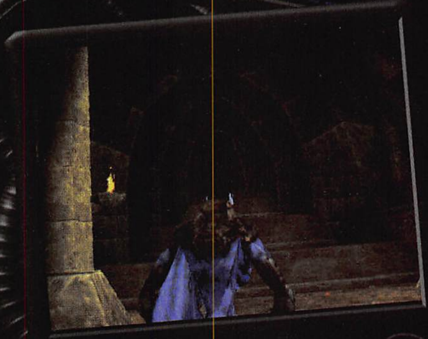
inset photos

Top: The Second Coming, slated for this fall. **Bottom:** Preparing for her return.

Contents

Cover Story:





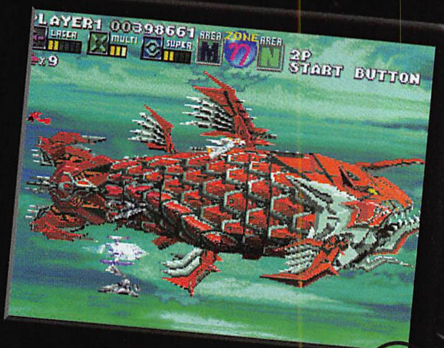








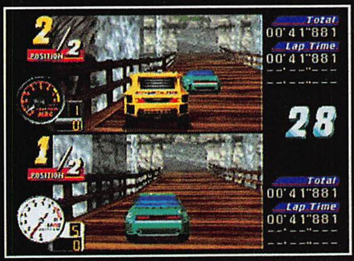














Is it really just a game?

Multi-Racing Championship blurs more than just the scenery. It blurs the line between gaming and reality.

Each of MRC's eight, fully customizable vehicles (plus two other secret vehicles) allow you to tweak gears, brakes, suspension and more. And you'll need to, because MRC's three intense courses pit you against more than just the clock. You'll be up against neck snapping terrain, nasty weather and up to 20 other drivers at a time.

Designed for the N64 Rumble Pak, MRC's detailed graphics, sound and multiple viewing perspectives can mean only one thing.

It starts where all the others finish.



MRC MULTI-RACING CHAMPIONSHIP ™

NINTENDO 64

KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

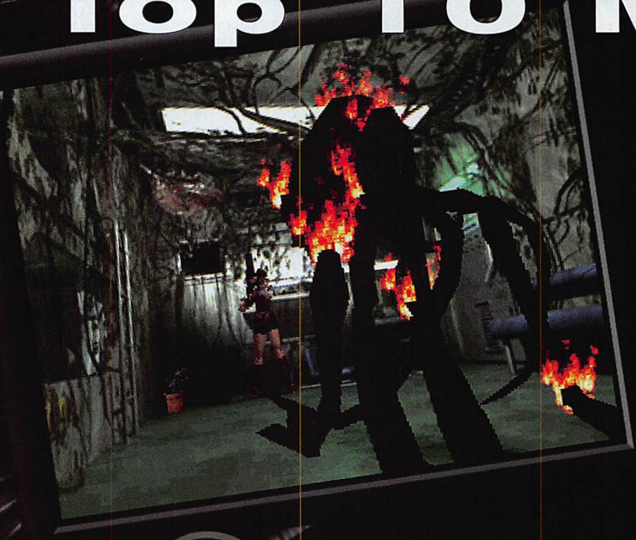
INFOGRAMES

ocean

www.oceanline.com

Top 10 Most Wanted

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 3/31/98



READERS' TOP TEN

1) *Resident Evil 2* - PS
2) *Final Fantasy 7* - PS
3) *Final Fantasy Tactics* - PS
4) *Goldeneye* - N64
5) *Yoshi's Story* - N64
6) *Castlevania: SOTN* - PS
7) *WCW Vs. NWO* - N64
8) *Tomb Raider 2* - PS
9) *Street Fighter Vs. X-men* - SS
10) *Mario 64* - N64

1 RESIDENT EVIL 2 PS
READERS' TOP TEN

READERS' MOST WANTED

1) *Zelda: TOOT* - N64
2) *Metal Gear Solid* - PS
3) *Parasite Eve* - PS
4) *F-Zero X* - N64
5) Tekken 3 - PS



6) *Grandia* - SS
7) *Turok 2* -N64
8) *Shining Force III* - SS
9) *Mission: Impossible* - N6
10) *Panzer Dragoon Saga* -

GAMEFAN EDITORS' TOP TEN



1. *Tenchu* - PS (Import)
2. *Parasite Eve* - PS (Import)
3. *Tekken 3* - PS (Import)
4. *Bust A Move* - PS (Import)
5. *Gran Turismo* - PS (Import)
6. *Xenogears* - PS (Import)
7. *Resident Evil 2* - PS
8. *Policenauts* - PS (Import)
9. *Quake* - Mac/Internet
10. *Front Mission Alt.* - PS (Import)



1. *VOOT (Virtual On 2)* - Arcade
2. *Tenchu* - PS (Import)
3. *Revenge of Shinobi* - Gen.
4. *Bust A Move* - PS (Import)
5. *Virtual On Netlink* - SS
6. *Banjo & Kazooie* - N64
7. *Bloody Roar* - PS
8. *SS Fencing Pack* - PS (Import)
9. *The Ninja* - Sega Master
10. *Dragonforce 2* - SS (Import)



1. *Tekken 3* - PS (Import)
2. *Quake* - Mac/Internet
3. *Gran Turismo* - PS (Import)
4. *Newman Haas* - PS
5. *1080º* - N64
6. *Top Gear Rally* - N64
7. *GoldenEye* - N64
8. *Choro Q3* - PS (Import)
9. *Rally Cross* - PS
10. *G-Police* - PS



1. *Civilization 2* - Mac
2. *All-Star Baseball '99* - N64
3. *Tekken 3* - PS (Import)
4. *NHL '98* - PS
5. *Quake* - Mac
6. *Starcraft* - PC
7. *Theme Hospital* - PS
8. *Bloody Roar* - PS
9. *Monster Rancher* - PS
10. *1080º* - N64



1. *Spriggan* - PC Engine (Import)
2. *Banjo & Kazooie* - N64
3. *Vigilante 8* - PS
4. *G-Darius* - PS (Import)
5. *Aldynes* - SuperGfx (Import)
6. *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* - SuperGfx
7. *Rayxanber 3* - PC Engine
8. *Hermie Hopperhead* - PS
9. *Vampire Savior* - SS (Import)
10. *Bass Fishing* - Arcade



1. *Starcraft* - PC
2. *Parasite Eve* - PS (Import)
3. *Virtual On* - Arcade/Saturn
4. *Warcraft II* - PC
5. *Tenchu* - PS (Import)
6. *Theme Park* - PS
7. *Monster Rancher* - PS
8. *Iggy's Recking' Balls* - N64
9. *Elevator Action 2* - Arcade
10. *Little Computer People* - C64

WIN

THE GAME SYSTEM OF YOUR CHOICE! ENTER TODAY!

All you have to do to enter the drawing is write down a list of your top 10 favorite games and the 10 games you want the most that aren't out yet, on a piece of paper or a postcard then send them to: GAMEFAN TOP TEN, 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

First Prize: Pocket GameBoy

Second Prize: Your choice of one of the Picks of the Month in Viewpoint.

Third Prize: A FREE year of GameFan! The best magazine in the universe!

Congratulations to last month's winners:

First Prize:	Second Prize:	Third Prize:
Brian Olmstead	Zaya Hanna	R. Gordon
Newport News, VA	Chicago, IL	Wank, WI

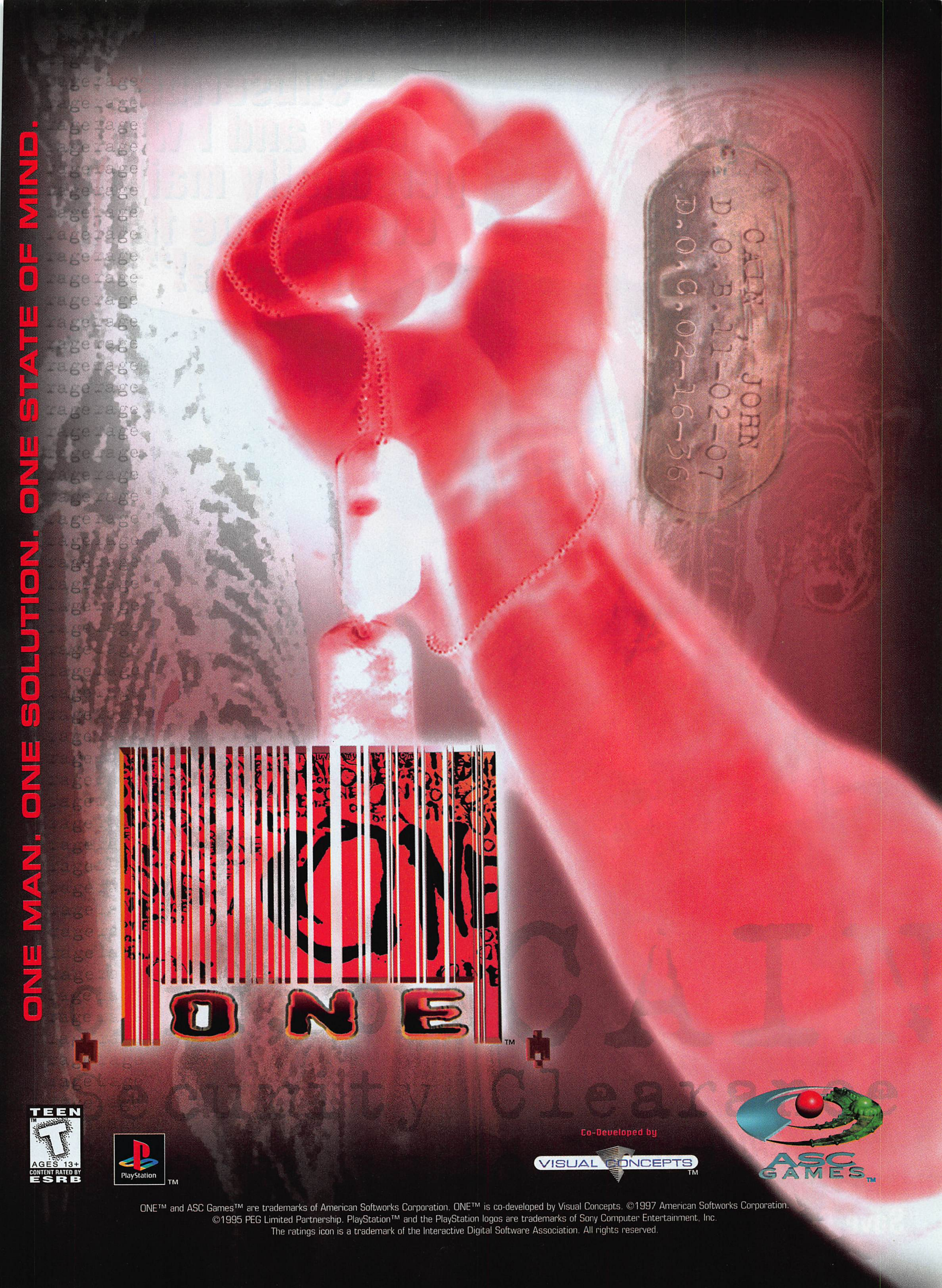
Drawing is limited to One (1) entry per person per month. Drawings will be held on the 21st of each month. The three (3) winners will be notified by mail and listed on this page. For a complete list of rules and regulations write: GameFan Top Ten with self addressed & stamped envelope.

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest:
Rustin Lee, Producer (and former GF Sports Editor)
Visual Concepts

1. *Starcraft* - PC
2. *Gameday '98* - PS
3. *Gran Turismo* - PS (Import)
4. *Quake* - PC/Mac
5. *NFL Blitz* - Arcade
6. *NBA Live '98* - PS
7. *Final Fantasy VII* - PS
8. *Street Fighter 2* - Any
9. *Street Fighter EX Alpha* - PS
10. *MicroMachines V3* - PS




ONE MAN. ONE SOLUTION. ONE STATE OF MIND.
CAIN, JOHN
D.O.B. 11-02-07
D.O.C. 02-16-36
ONE™
Security Clearance
TEEN
AGES 13+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
PlayStation™
Co-Developed by
VISUAL CONCEPTS™
ASC GAMES™
ONE™ and ASC Games™ are trademarks of American Softworks Corporation. ONE™ is co-developed by Visual Concepts. ©1997 American Softworks Corporation.
©1995 PEG Limited Partnership. PlayStation™ and the PlayStation logos are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc.
The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. All rights reserved.



"Subscribe now and I will personally mail out every issue from my cave!"
SONY PLAYSTATION • SEGA SATURN • NINTENDO 64 • NEO GEO • M2 • SNES • GENESIS • ARCADE
GAMEFAN
NEXT GENERATION VIDEO GAME MAGAZINE
INSIDE THIS ISSUE!
GRAN TURISMO
GEX 2
BLASTO
MARCH MADNESS
VIGILANTE 8
FRONT MISSION ALTERNATIVE
LEGEND OF MYSTICAL NINJA
BIO FREAKS
BANJO KAZOOIE
QUAKE 64
GRANDIA
FIRST LOOK AT:
STREET FIGHTER EX PART 2!!!
HE'S BACK! MONITAUR RETURNS, AND HE MEANS BUSINESS!
Cover Story: SEGA'S BURNING RANGERS



THE GIANT DEMONSTRATES HIS MOST DEVASTATING NEW WRESTLING MOVE.
Over 40 wrestlers, including more than 20 WCW and NWO superstars: Hollywood Hogan, Sting, The Giant, Lex Luger, Ric Flair, The Outsiders, The Steiner Brothers, Dean Malenko, Syxx, Eddy Guerrero, Chris Benoit, Scott Norton, Rey Mysterio, Jr., Steven Regal, Ultimo Dragon, Buff Bagwell, and many more!
Each wrestler has 30 to 40 moves, including his own signature moves
Tag Team and simultaneous four-player action
Five different play modes
"One of the Fall's hottest games!"
– GamePro, July 1997
WCW vs. nWo
WORLD TOUR
NINTENDO64
Only For
THQ
www.thq.com
www.WCWwrestling.com
Visit your local retailer or call
1-818-225-5167 for orders only
WCW vs. NWO World Tour © 1997 World Championship Wrestling/NWO/THQ Inc.
Nintendo® and N64 are registered trademarks of Nintendo of America Inc.
THQ


THE ADVENTURES OF MONITAUR
STORY AND ART: TERRY WOLFINGER
COLOR ASSISTANT: SPUD STINI-LARK
HAHAHA
HAHAH
UNDER THE SHADOW OF RECENT EVENTS...
--NAMELY THE NEAR DESTRUCTION OF TEAM GAMEFAN HEADQUARTERS BY THE NEFARIOUS VILLIAN, BLOWMEISTER--
-MONITAUR AND THE REST OF THE TEAM ARE PICKING UP THE PIECES AND CARRYING ON.
THE BLOWMEISTER! LONG THOUGHT DEAD, HAS RESURFACED TIME AND AND TIME AGAIN AS THE ONE ENTITY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WORST VIDEO GAMES EVER MADE. MIND-DAMAGING GAMES! SENSORY-NUMBING GAMES! EVEN GAMES THAT SMELL! (WHO CAN FORGET "STINK FOX"™?)
UNFORTUNATELY, HIS PRESENCE STILL EXISTS.
WELL, HE FINALLY MANAGED TO INFLICT SOME REAL DAMAGE ON US THIS TIME..
THE HEADQUARTERS ALL BUT DESTROYED. THE CASUALTY LIST STILL GROWING. THE ENQUIRER, KNIGHT-MARE, NICK ROX, SUBSTANCE-D, AND GLITCH ALL MET WITH TRAGIC ENDS.
AND WE'RE STILL PULLING BODIES OUT OF THE RUBBLE. AND ALL THIS STRESS IS SURE TO BE TAKING ITS TOLL ON ALL THE SURVIVORS. NOT TO MENTION THE CONDITION E. STORM IS IN...


BUT IT'S GOOD WE HAD THE NEW GUYS OVER AT THE OTHER BUILDING. THEY HAVE REALLY HELPED OUT TREMENDOUSLY.
IT'S A GOOD THING WE HAVE POSTY'S CAVE WITH ALL OUR ARCHIVES, TOO.
EVERYBODY'S PULLING TOGETHER TO GET THE PLACE CLEANED UP.
HOLD UP D. DUB. I GOT SOME MORE TAKUHI PARTS FOR THE DUMP
COO COO, WOLFIE!
OH MY GOD! EGGO'S BEEN FLATTENED!
HEY!
NAW, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY.
YEAH! BACK OFF, FAT ASS!
UCLA
HEY, CHIEF. I THINK SOME OF THE GUYS ARE TAKING OFF.
I AM NOT FAT!
DOINK
HM? WELL, LET'S HAVE A LOOK THEN.


HEY, HAMBLETON. WHERE YOU HEADED?
GOT A JOB AT THE SLAUGHTERED LAMB. THEY GOT'S A COYOTE PROBLEM OR SUMTHIN'.
SO LONG, CHAPS. I'M OFF TO THE U.K. CHEERS!
VRUM VRUM
TAXI
ISTANBUL
AND I'M GOING BACK TO MY HOME PLANET OF URANUS.
I GUESS THE STRESS GOT TOO MUCH FOR 'EM.
I'M AFRAID SO.
HEY GUYS! WE GOT SOME NEWS ON STORM!


NOTE LOOKS OF CONCERN ON FACES
C'MON, WE GOT E. STORM DOWN HERE IN THE INTENSIVE CARE UNIT.
SPECIAL CARE
MULLET WARD
THE GOOD NEWS IS HE'S ALIVE AND SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE SO...
AND THE BAD NEWS?



! ! !
HIS MIND IS TOTALLY GONE!
SNES
HOO BOY! WHAT NEXT?! FIND OUT NEXT ISH.
Wolfinger '98


My thing is speed.
8 THRUST jets. 4 rudder jets-
My stone goes like a scalded cat.
I move in QUICK strike fast and BLOW before they know what hit em.
ALL their FIREPOWER doesn't mean jack
if they can't hit me.
ripcord games
KODIAK
Heavy FIREPOWER
is for SUCKERS with small JOHNsons.
All I need are 3 solar collectors and
MAXIMUM SHIELD WALLS
Oh yeah, and about a dozen RAMMING spikes.
When my fortress ROCKS your world, you'll know it.
Firepower, FIREPOWER and MORE firepower.
This isn't a BRIDAL SHOWER, it's war.
I'll take my chances with 4 doom bolt guns,
2 dragstone LAUNCHERS and 3 SHOCKwave cannons.
TRUST me.
You don't want any of what
I got for you.
what kind of fortress will you build
CONQUEST OF THE SKIES
STRATOSPHERE
part STRATEGY. part FEAR
(888) 797-JUMP(5867)
www.stratospherepc.com
www.ripcordgames.com

Peripheral Vision:

Toys, toys, and gee, more toys!! If I had my way (which is often blocked off by the large and tubby ECM), I'd change the title of "Peripheral Vision" to "Toys, toys, and more toys." Stupid you say? Perhaps, but it would perfectly explain the smattering of assorted controllers, memory cards, hand-held games, and other fun accessories that lay upon my desk right now. That or the powers that be (the big and stuffy management) want yours truly to do a feature on all these little gadgets, so let's get to it, shall we?

Pelican Accessories

A newcomer on the peripheral block, they've come out of the gate with some pretty sturdy controllers . Pelican's N64 controller is worth mention, has rounded out edges, and swooping designs that would trick an underwater stingray into thinking that it had found its mate (Ed's Note: You need to get out a little more often, Dango). In addition to the standard buttons (which are nice and large), a turbo button, and slow motion button decorated the upper area of the controller. Although the analog stick was quite stiff, all new controllers have that brand new feel, and after a couple hours of your favorite N64 game, it should handle very dandy-like. Pelican also distributes colorful memory cards, that look pretty sweet. Six colors are available for both Pelican's N64 controllers and their memory cards (oh, and the mem cards resemble 3.5" floppy disks-pretty cool).

Innovation

With an assortment of glittering Jolt Paks and other video game hardware, Innovation makes some pretty solid stuff, though the novelty of gold and silver colored Jolt Paks (Innovation's Rumble Pak) is lost on me. I would ask the Enquirer, but alas, he lays crushed under a game he wasn't really good at.

Innovation's N64 controller is really slick, and I actually like this controller more than the original N64 pad. Trimmed down and more curvaceous, it brought back thoughts of that young cute Dango I saw the other day and... er, um, in any case, it's shape is much more appealing, though the additional Turbo, Auto, Clear, and Slow buttons are laid out rather poorly. The controller works fine, though the analog stick seemed a bit sticky at times. With a little breaking-in, though, it's terrific. Innovation's N64 controller is a "must buy" for every N64 fanatic.

Another accessory, both cool and useful, is the Universal 3-way RF Switch. This solves the problem of nearly every modern day console not working with old TV's. The Universal RF Switch comes complete with adaptable video cables for the Saturn, Playstation, and N64. Well made and very smart, my only gripe is that it would be a small hassle for a person with all systems to change from system to system. I could definitely see the use of this accessory on travel, especially with most hotel systems (since most hotel TVs don't have an input for RCA cables).

AIMS Lab, Inc.

Jolting, jammin', joy! The box quote "Change the way you look @ computers" is right on the mark with AIMS "JAM!!" peripheral. With this gadget, you can play console video games on your computer monitor. We're talking high resolution graphics, baby! Complete with speaker plugs to allow stereo amplified sounds, this is a really cool accessory for the split video console/PC gamer. Rewiring is not a hassle since a "flick" of the switch toggles between the video game, and computer screen. Though made for the PC, a Mac adapter is available for multi-synch Mac monitors at most computer dealers. As always, I have one gripe: The fact that it uses your computer's graphic card (VGA or better) in order to play games. So don't be rushing to the nearest computer store and buying just a monitor.



What is remarkable, though, is the sheer increase in picture quality this unit brings about. Hook your PlayStation, Saturn, N64, or any other console that has at least composite cables and prepare to change your pants. The jump in picture quality is staggering. It's at least as good as the leap from composite to S-Video; perhaps even better. There is no color bleed from pixels with this handy little unit, no ghost images, no halos around any of the sprites or polys, and it just looks incredible. All the graphics have a bright, luminous look to them. As soon as ECM got ahold of one of these devices he locked himself in his office and hasn't come out since. In fact, taking a look at X-Men vs. Street Fighter on Saturn and then checking it out next to our actual JAMMA board arcade machine with the same game running, it would appear that the JAM! unit actually produces the better picture!

I can't praise this item enough. If you have any interest in having the sharpest possible picture you can have and have a computer go out and get one of these things now! It sure beats the heck out of having to buy an RGB monitor and custom RGB cables for each of your systems.

Gone Fishing

As of late, virtual fishing games on home consoles, as well as the arcades, have been making an impact in the video game market. My guess as to why this is, is to avoid those pesky mosquitoes, and drunken fishermen (like Big Bubba) running you down in their powerboats. In any case, Innovation has introduced three portable hand-held fishing games (complete with reel), and the temptation to sneak out to a nearby beach, lounge, and play virtual fishing is way too appealing. If only I could get these shackles off that Kid Fan locked me down with.



All these fishing games feature a vibrating simulation of fishing; catch a fish, and the whole unit starts shaking. Much like real fishing, you have to worry about breaking your line, as well as actually casting and hooking the fish.

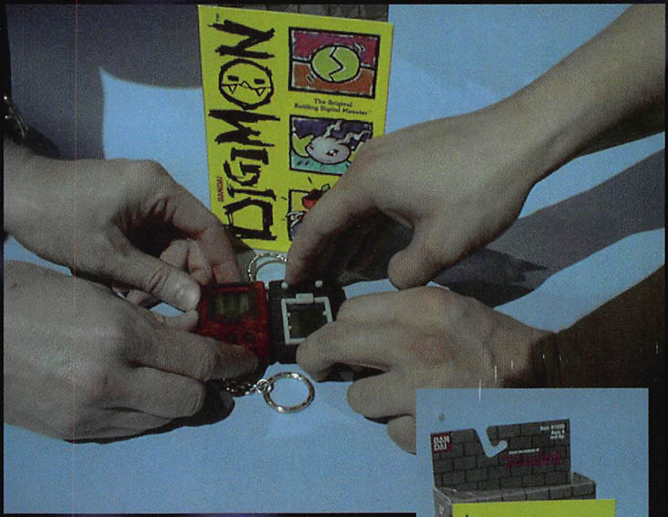
First off is Sport Fishin', sporting a rather bland technical readout, with a single hinge reel. The game plays okay, but the readout is way to technical, with words decorating the whole screen. The screen itself is small, and sometimes I found it difficult bagging the fish. Out of the three, it is probably the low man on the totem pole.

In sharp contrasts Junior Fishin', which comes complete with screaming neon pink colors, as well as a screen display and reel in the shape of a fish. Obviously tailored to a younger mindset (much like Arcade Bob, GF's managing editor!), it was probably the easiest to play, and perhaps a bit too easy as I rarely broke a line or missed a hook. Though it plays better than Sport Fishin,' the bright colors are just too much as I don't like dreaming about huge pink neon fish when I go to bed.

Cyber Fishin was definitely the best out of the three. With a sporty blue look, double handled-reel, and easy to read layout, it played great and even though the readout was filled with radar, depth, and line tension meters, the screen was big enough to see what was going on. If you're going to get a Cyber Fishin hand-held (which is my prediction for the hottest new hand-held trend), Innovation's Cyber Fishin is the catch of the day.

Bandai

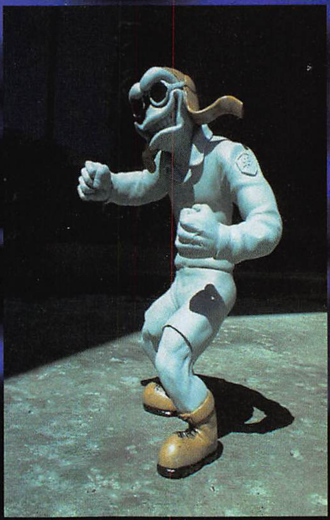
Once again, Bandai always shows the latest craves and raves of the electronic gadget culture of Japan. With the success of Tamagotchi, Bandai's newest digital pet, Digimon, might seem like the same darn thing with a new look, but don't be fooled. Taking away the cutesy flavor for some real manly (if you can call carrying a digital pet, manly) flair, you build up your pet for battle! On the top of each Digimon are metallic springs. When your Digimon pet is fully mature, hook up with another mature Digimon pet and do battle!! This adds long-term playability, and has started some trash talking heat amongst the editors at GameFan HQ. Digimons are available now, and much like the Tamagotchi, will sell like mad, so I suggest you get them soon.





Also available from Bandai (here's the cross sales marketing hook), are the original Digimon monster figures. Plastic versions of the monsters you can bring up, each are pretty well detailed, and as a cool bonus, Bandai has packed in their poo poo, too. While cute, I can't see anyone but the most hard core Digimon owner grabbing a pack of these... though I could see Eggo grabbing a few for more people in his tea party.

Posty Statue



OK, so this isn't exactly 'mass-market' yet, but here he is in full 3D glory: the Postmeister statue, modeled by GF's own in-house artist-extreme, Terry Wolfinger. Proving not only that the boy can draw decently (OK, so he's awesome-can't go pumping up his ego too much), he can also sculpt with the Michelangelos of the world (OK, now I'm pushing it). This thing is just so friggin' cool. So cool, in fact, that many a GF staffer has planned a raid to snag this 'one-of-a-kind' goodie from Terry only to be re-buffed by the Postman himself. While there are no plans to mass-produce this nifty little statuette, depending on the response we get from this maybe we can work something out. I can see it now (cue wavy lines, and harp music): The world goes wild for the Posty statue, and Posty mania sweeps the world. Never has a fad been so out of control: Posty sneakers, Posty comics, Posty stamps (the Postmeister's most fevered dream come true!), heck, even Posty Post-Its...(Ed's Note: Dango has been taken to a better place to recover from his mild case of dementia).

Peripheral Vision:



Dual Shock!

After much toying around, getting banged about by some of the bigger bigwigs of the industry, the notorious "D.S.C" (Dual Shock Controller) for the PlayStation is making its US debut probably by the time you pick up this issue at your nearest newsstand. Finally, US PlayStation fanatics will get to see what all the raving is about, and ECM can give an exasperated sigh as the two Dual Shock freaks (Waka and Eggo) will be jumping up and about cheering,

"IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DUAL SHOCK!"

So what's all the hype about the Dual Shock controller for Sony's PlayStation? First off, it's an analog controller. That should be a relief for those PlayStation purists of flying and driving games who have been doing their best getting through the many analog compatible games through the 'tap-tap' motions of yesteryear. Analog control on the Dual Shock pad is both incredibly precise, and extremely comfortable, as there are two soft rubber sticks for various control uses. They remind me of the feeling of those really soft erasers Mrs. Teacher in 4th grade used to give out (cue the Charlie Brown teacher voice).

But what really sets it apart from both the Saturn Analog and N64 controller is its vibrating attraction. With 3 varying degrees of force, with left to right positioning, games compatible with the Dual Shock Pad will let you know that your character in the game got hit, or shot, or mauled in any conceivable way (it's like force feedback in Dolby surround).

What's great is, unlike the Rumble Pak for the N64, the Dual Shock Pad gets its rumbling power internally from the PlayStation. Careful inspection of the plug reveals a small metallic plate, which would explain the Dual Shock's source of shaking. After playing some of the Dual Shock compatible games, I can honestly say that the tremor sensation isn't just cool, but pretty precise. Say you're screaming through a turn in a racing game and decide that you're not going to use the brakes or let off the gas—well, when you run smack into that wall you'll know it. You'll also know which side of your car to circle on those handy police reports for damage









Partial Dual Shock List:

Here's an abbreviated list of Dual Shock compatible games, both import and domestic. Keep in mind that previously released analog and feedback games **do** work with the Dual Shock pad, but **do not** support the different types of vibrations that the newer pad does.

Import Titles:

Tenchu
Gran Turismo
Parasite Eve
Tekken 3
Dead or Alive
Soukyu Gurentai
Xenogears
R-Types
Crash Bandicoot 2
(yes, the import does support it)
Fighting Eyes
Buckle Up
Hyper Olympics Nagano
Gundam the Battlemaster 2

Domestic Titles:

note that some of the above US-released titles do not support the Dual Shock pad, thus the re-iteration of titles here.

Dead or Alive
Tekken 3
Gran Turismo
Vigilante 8

Coming Soon:

Colony Wars: Vengeance
Tenchu (US)

markings. See, if you're driving your car and you hit something on the left side of your car, the intensity of the rumbling will shake more on the left side of the Dual Shock pad. The Dual Shock has enhanced the gaming experience twofold for some (Waka and Eggo raise their hands) while some others have yet to see the light, and call it a novelty (ECM perhaps?).

Dual Shock compatible games are available, though most are import games. Great games like the racer Gran Turismo take full advantage of both the Dual Shock's analog and simulated shaking attributes, while other imports like Tekken 3, Tenchu, and Dead or Alive, use only the Dual Shock's quake like jarring to "enhance" the feel of getting hit (they don't feature analog control)... never thought you'd want to actually feel Heihachi's Uppercut, did you?

If imports aren't your style, the Dual Shock pad is already being planned for domestic games such as Vigilante 8, with full analog and Dual Shock experience, as well as the US releases of Tekken 3 and Tenchu. For now (well, as we're writing this), there are no fully Dual Shock US compatible games, though Need for Speed 3 and Midway's Arcade Greatest Hits: Atari Collection 2 are both analog (analog control is pretty interesting when playing Marble Madness).

With a solid, sturdy design, comfortable feel, and some great games backing it up, the Dual Shock controller looks set to heighten the gaming experience. I wouldn't be surprise, or "shocked" to find them sold out pretty rapidly. So head out to your nearest video game supplier today, and snap-up the PlayStation Dual Shock controller, while the Dual Shock fans here at GameFan strap ECM in a chair and prepare to deliver some Dual



Shock Therapy- "Hold his arms Waka....CLEAR!!! <Bzzzzzt>!"

GAMEBOY CAMERA and PRINTER

To say Nintendo has managed to get some mileage out of the GameBoy would be an understatement along the lines of Dangohead has a rather large noggin' (we're talkin' Nebraska-big, folks). So when we heard that Nintendo was working on not only a camera for the GameBoy, but a printer as well, we weren't exactly shocked. However, we were pretty sure that it was gonna be rather cheesy and not worth the bother to get a hold of one. Well, after spending some time with what we thought were merely 'GameBoy life extenders' here's our thoughts on the matter:

Although it's not quite a digital camera Nintendo has come up with an inexpensive version that will prove to be yet another innovation that adds up to yet another reason for you to buy a GameBoy . They have come up with a way to turn the GameBoy into a digital camera. While they've had these crazy little gizmos on PCs for years, leave it to Nintendo to make them truly mass-market. And when you're done snapping shots with your handy little camera, print 'em out on the GameBoy printer.

The camera fits into the cartridge port on the GameBoy and the camera head can rotate 180 degrees clockwise and will allow you to take pictures of your dog, cat, goldfish or anything else your heart desires (even pictures of the Video Cowboy and Bubba—now that's a frightening prospect if there ever was one). There's no film to develop, the pictures are instantaneous and in fairly good resolution. In fact, considering that the GameBoy only reproduces 4 shades of gray, the images look surprisingly clear and sharp; not what you'd expect from a $50 add-on for a portable game machine (pretty soon you'll be able to get DSS on these things).

The camera has seven different modes you can choose from including Shoot, Play, View and pressing select on the Mode Select Screen to access four more modes including Link, Doodle, Special, and Edit. Each mode allows you to play around with the images you grab in an interesting, albeit fun way.

You can store up to 30 pictures in memory and can view them on the GameBoy screen. You can even use the camera in your Super GameBoy unit and view them in limited color on your television screen.

Viewing the pictures is easy and you can check 'em out individually or in a slide show or movie format.

There is even a mode entitled Doodle that allows you to Doodle on the pictures and get really creative—I created a half-Vid Cowboy, half-Bubba monstosity the likes of which the world shall never see again (I had to burn the GameBoy after that episode, <brrrr>).

You can also 'star' in a game, or at least your face can. Place your own face at the center of the action in the Ball game. Or better yet, a vertically scrolling shooter that allows you to place images in it like using your head as a boss-pretty cool. You can even use the animation feature to add some limited animation to it and have the face grimace each time it gets hit (or smile, depending on the kind of company you keep...yipe).

To top it all off, there's even a DJ UFO mode that will allow you to add sound effects, rhythm, rap scratch sounds and create your own music soundtrack using the GameBoy camera. Although you can't utilize the music and the photographic features at the same time. You can input your face or someone you know on the DJ's face. I can see it now: Thousands of people across the country starring in their own Parappa-style games...hmmm, ECM the Rapper—yeah, that could work.

To wrap it all up, you can hook up two GameBoys, each with its own camera. and share pictures between them. Who needs photo albums when you can have a cool little device like this? OK, maybe I'm taking this a bit too far, but this thing is really pretty cool.

For all you aspiring film makers this could be just the ticket to launch you onto biger and better things (hey, you have to start somewhere, right?). The GameBoy camera and printer go on sale June 1 and will reatail for $49.99 for the camera and $59.99 for the black and white printer. Of course you have to already own a GameBoy or GameBoy pocket (just to make it abundantly clear that they don't function without one).

VIEWPOINT

Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality



ECM | EL NINO | REUBUS | SHIDOSHI | EGGO | DANGOHEAD | WAKA





Bio-Freaks
PlayStation
Midway
Fighting

With *Mortal Kombat 4* right around the corner, why oh why didn't Midway just leave this one on the cutting room floor with the scrapped arcade version. Sure, the Barker-esque band of mutant freaks is really cool (think Cenobites with bigger, sharper implements of pain), but the sad fact of the matter is the engine is on the tragic side. I tried and tried to get into it, but the sloppy control took the wind out of my flagging sails. If this game had concentrated a little more on solid play mechanics and a little less on dismemberment, well, it coulda been something.

G 7 | C 6 | P 6 | M 5 | O 5 | **56**

When *Biofreaks* came into our hands the first time around, I laughed out loud. An unfinished *Biofreaks* is bad enough, but the finished version left much to be desired. Sure, it has multi-plane levels, jump jets, and that all important aspect in fighting games... gore. Yeah, gore is so important that minute elements like good character design, good play mechanics, and overall decent gameplay were taken out. Gee, I guess I've been playing all the bad fighting games while winners like these have gone under my eyes, right? Wrong..

G 6 | C 7 | P 5 | M 4 | O 5 | **54**

I liked the different-looking character design (many spiky appendages and razors), flying/fighting in the air, and hacking off limbs. But these somewhat original ideas don't make up for a poorly animated, awful fighting game, and horrid techno music (make it stop, please...). Something as simple as good gameplay was just overlooked in this one, and what you're left with is a polygonal fighter which nobody cares about. Toss this one in the recycle bin next to Criticom.

G 6 | C 6 | P 4 | M 5 | O 7 | **49**



Dark Omen
PlayStation
EA
Strategy

I love strategy and I love RPGs, but this game doesn't do it for me. Tedium is the only word to describe playing this convoluted title. Nothing more than *Warhammer: Shadow of the Horned Rat*, *Dark Omen* has issues. The interface sucks and the graphics are borderline 16-bit. It was cool when it was called *Centurian*, on the Genesis; now, it's lame. The developers have the right idea here. With a good engine and game design this would be a big hit. Unfortunately, all *Dark Omen* can do now, is flounder.

G 4 | C 4 | P 4 | M 7 | O 8 | **59**

I'm no strategy nut like Eggo, but I do enjoy a good strategy game now and then... So, hearing the clamor from the rest of my esteemed workers, I popped in *Dark Omen*, treated myself to some pretty cool intro CG, and then let my mouth fall open at the poor control mechanics, and dated visuals. Sending troops and armies to specific places is a slow bore, and sometimes the AI leaves more to be desired. Good music and decent sound effects just can't save it from the slowness and uninspired play. When you finally get somewhere in this game, wake me up... zzzzzzz

G 6 | C 5 | P 6 | M 8 | O 8 | **73**

Generally speaking, I really get into strategy RPGs. Heck, I like 'em better than more straightforward RPGs like the *Final Fantasy* and *Lunar* series of games. However, just like the first game in this series, this one doesn't really do it for me. Was it the graphics or gameplay? Probably both. The visuals are a little too chunky for my tastes and the gameplay is quite tricky to deal with through a stock PS pad (real gamers only use stock controllers—no peripherals for me, thanks). That being said, it's not that I hated it, it's just that it's decidedly average—not something I could really get into.

G 6 | C 5 | P 6 | M 8 | O 7 | **75**



Dead or Alive
PlayStation
Tecmo
Fighting

I totally dig this game. The graphics are amazing, the frame rate is a whopping 60fps, and the female contestants are very... how should I say... perky. This game has a lot to offer in the way of modes, and the moves library for each combatant is extensive. Not as much fun as *Bloody Roar* or *Tekken 3* (I wish there were more playable characters!) but a definite must have for your home library. Thanks Tecmo, for adding the extra fighters in the home version.

G 9 | C 9 | P 8 | M 7 | O 8 | **93**

The PlayStation has never seen a version of *Virtua Fighter*, for obvious reasons. Well, here's a game that plays a lot like *VF* on your PS with a little extra, <ahem>, bounce. Thrill to *Tobal 2*-style visuals as you execute your best tap-tap motions and take your foes to the danger zone (hey, that's kinda catchy). While it isn't what I'd call a straight arcade port, it gets the job done in spades. Oh, and if you're wondering—yes, this game kills *Tekken 3* (no button mashers here, thank you very much). Although I suppose the reversal button is a little questionable.

G 9 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 8 | **90**

More bounce to the pounce... okay, no more bouncy references. *DoA* was never a game I played much in the arcades as I suppose I was mesmerized by the err... um... graphics. But on a serious note, this is pretty much a *VF2* ripoff with a good parry system. Good graphics, and well balanced characters, my only gripe is the number of characters is rather limited, and while this is very far from being a bad fighting game, the selling point is the very sensual graphic content. At first it put a smile on my face, but I don't like the idea of using eye candy as the attention grabber rather than its strength as a good game.

G 9 | C 7 | P 8 | M 8 | O 7 | **86**



Tekken 3
PlayStation
Namco
Fighting

Okay. This game scares me! Not only do they throw in everything that the arcade has, but pack it in with new bonuses including, Force Mode, Ball Mode, Theater Mode, Practice Mode, practically any mode you can think of! And, if you still have any of your *Tekken* series at home, you can go into Theater Mode and sample all and I mean ALL of the game's CG and music (arranged and original) from the previous *Tekkens*!! Now when was the last time a game let you do that in any series huh? Buy it cuz WAKA sez so!!

G 10 | C 9 | P 10 | M 8 | O 7 | **96**

Tekken 3 has arrived and with it, all the combos, counters, and secret characters with its famous name. I stopped playing *Tekken* after *Tekken 2*, but *Tekken 3* is an excellent conversion from the arcade. I'm sure fanatics will love it, but I'm kind of worn out of the *Tekken* loop. Sure, it has tons of characters, tons of combos, and tons of replay value. But the *Tekken* combat system isn't as precise as I'd wanted it to be, especially in *Tekken 3*. While still an all-around fighter, I'm not so excited that I would go out right now and buy it. I'm sure my two colleagues on either side will throw me to the wolves, but *Tekken 3* needs a bit more for this Dango.

G 9 | C 7 | P 8 | M 7 | O 7 | **86**

Tekken 3! Woo-hoo! I'm lovin' it! I don't get to arcades much, believe it or not, so I'd only played *T3* briefly prior to gettin' my hands on the PS version. Boy, I'm kind of glad I didn't play it much at the arcades, 'cause I'd have gone broke in no time playing this! *Tekken 3* rocks! Period. Some of its critics around here (cough*ECM*cough) say it's nothing but a button-masher (cough*DOA*cough) ... Well, I say it's great that anyone can pick it up and instantly play, but sticking with it and learning the timings and intricacies is very satisfying. Awesome game. Now if only I could get more than 34 in survival mode...

Special thanks to "Mishima," of GF Chatroom fame, for helping ol' Reubus figure out some of T3's wonders!

G 10 | C 9 | P 9 | M 9 | O 8 | **93**



Theme Hospital
PlayStation
EA
Hospital Sim.

Coming to the office one day, I heard a loud speaker announce, "Paging doctor so and so..." and I thought I was in the wrong building. Well, it was just chubby El Niño playing *Theme Hospital*, something I didn't think he'd get into. Well, not only did El Niño get hooked, I got hooked. If you're a fan of any good simulation games (*Sim City*, *Theme Park*, etc.), you'll have fun treating patients, billing customers, paying debts, and even exterminating vermin (DIE MOUSEY, DIE!!). Thank god that it's just a game. The smell of hospitals... grrrrrrr.

G 9 | C 9 | P 8 | M 7 | O 8 | **87**

Now this is pretty sweet. Although I never really got into *Theme Park* (beyond throwing artery-choking amounts of salt on the fries and an iceberg's worth of ice in the soft drinks, heh), this is an entirely different story. Build up your own hospital and deal with patients on a daily basis. Cure their ailments, treat their woes, and slap 'em with a bill that will send them right back to intensive care. Those of you that get into Maxis' 'Sim' series of games will have a ball with this one: "Paging Dr. ECM, paging..."

G 7 | C 8 | P 8 | M 7 | O 9 | **88**

Since my cubicle is next to El Niño's, I was always distracted from my work by the canned nurse on the PA system of Theme Hospital saying, "Doctor required in Deflator room." And every time I walked by his screen, I'd see a rat run into a hole in the wall. You've gotta love simulations like this and Theme Park which make you say, "What?! You control that!!? Rats??" If you're into sims, you've found your home. Thanks, Bullfrog. Now where's my Theme Restaurant?

G 8 | C 9 | P 8 | M 7 | O 9 | **91**

Banjo is a much-improved Mario 64. I especially like the story, the character sounds when they speak ("wah wah wah wah wah..."), and the variety of animals forms you can take: ant, walrus, and crocodile. The graphics have improved upon Mario, and the gameplay is more challenging, making Banjo easily one of the top three games on the N64. Unfortunately, I'm not 100% sold on it because I think collections aren't fun—find 100 music notes or five gingos to pick up one of 10 puzzle pieces to complete a level, etc.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 7 — 94

I was very apprehensive about Banjo, since I knew a tsunami of Mario 64 clones were crashing in. Well, out of the surf, I enjoyed a nice long romp, and I must say I enjoy this game much more than Mario 64. Great visuals, cool game mechanics, and some incredibly unique characters are just the tip of the iceberg. I didn't care too much for the music, and the cutesy look is somewhat annoying, but getting over all that, this is, so far, the finest game on the N64 I've played this year.

G 9 C 9 P 9 M 7 O 8 — 93

Now this is more like it. After my less-than-enthusiastic appraisal of *Yoshi's Story* (what happened there, Nintendo?), it's nice to see the heir apparents to N64 console coding wizardry, Rare, flexing their considerable programming prowess. An absolutely incredible piece of software that no N64 owner should be without. Looks like *GoldenEye* finally has a companion at the top of the N64 tree—too bad they kicked Nintendo out of their own treehouse. Now if they could just get that pseudo-sequel to *GoldenEye* out yesterday!

G 9 C 9 P 10 M 7 O 9 — 95



Banjo and Kazooie
Nintendo 64
Rare
3-D Platform

Last month, I tried to defend *Judge Dredd* from the frothingly angry gun gamers in the building. But this month, I can't defend *House of the Dead* from the onslaught of editorial abuse. Textures are indeed horrific (befitting the name of the game), pixelly, and the monsters themselves are barely shadows of their arcade selves. Going from the arcade version to the Saturn version is a traumatic experience (poor Dango, die-hard Sega head, had to leave the room when El Niño popped in *HoD* to see what the fuss was about). Poor Saturn 8[<sniff> <sniff>

G 6 C 7 P 6 M 5 O 8 — 60

House of the Dead? More like *House of the Dead System*. This game was a ton of fun in the arcade, but is simply putrid on the home system. It pains me to see the Saturn go out like this. The graphics are so bad you think you're playing *Revolution X*, on the Genesis. The textures are horrible, the frame rate blows and the creatures are repetitive. Some may be more forgiving than I, but I honestly can't think of why. Luckily, *Judge Dredd* came out this year, so *House Of the Dead* won't have to live with the stigma of being the worst gun game this year.

G 5 C 6 P 6 M 4 O 7 — 59

It's the end of the world as we know it... and I feel ill... <blech>. As a pretty hardcore Sega fan this game has caused me many sleepless nights and a lot of soul-searching: Is this what has become of my beloved Saturn? I was looking forward to a pretty big bang for the Saturn's final curtain call, what with the majesty of *Panzer Dragoon Saga* last month, and the spectacle of *Shining Force 3* next month. This is one you can afford to skip. Pixelly, messy textures make this game far scarier than it ever was in its Model 2 incarnation. *Virtua Cop* meets *Resident Evil*? Yeah, it was a cool idea that got seriously mangled in the translation.

G 5 C 8 P 6 M 5 O 8 — 67



The House of the Dead
Saturn
Sega
Gun Game

Dragon Force 2, which now assumes a more "serious" look than its cartoony predecessor may have missed the mark on that point, but gameplay has been improved with the ability to bring different unit types into battle now. This opens up an entirely new realm of unit combination strategies. And though Dangohead didn't care for the one dramatic battle song played over and over again, I liked it because it was fitting for the epic 200-people carnage fests which await. Fans of the first will like this one, because at the heart of it, *DF2* is just plain fun, which is what games should be...

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 — 83

I was a HUGE fan of the first *Dragon Force* game. It was easily the best game that Working Designs has ever done, with fantastic 100 vs. 100 battles and some pretty incredible sprite-based action. Alas, the more serious tone of *DF2* left something to be desired. I preferred the more 'cartoony' presentation of the first game, with its more colorful, cleaner graphics over what was obviously an attempt to make the game more 'serious.' Beyond that, it's still a good, solid game, and a lot of fun can be derived from it-even those that are worried about the language barrier. Big fans of the first need this.

G 7 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 8 — 80

While I enjoyed *Dragon Force*, the game's simplicity and lack of depth left me wanting. Troop management was rudimentary, generals allocation was lacking, and the strategy element was extremely basic. It had style, though, and the battle sequences were refreshing. *Dragon Force 2* maintains the great game design and combat engine but has added needed depth (now you can mix units!). The story is better, the strategy elements are more pivotal and some pretty cool spells are available. A nice sequel that will please fans, but will also probably turn off RPG fans looking for something a little beefier.

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 8 O 7 — 74



Dragon Force 2
Saturn
Sega of Japan
Strategy RPG

Unlike ECM, the self-proclaimed shooter king, I'm not too hot on shooters, though I love the visuals that the genre demonstrates. After playing *G-Darius*, I'm beginning to think I should play these types of games more often. Awesome graphics, and supreme effects, *G-Darius* improves the *Darius* lineage with the new and very cool "Capture" ability. Some minor flaws include some pixelly explosion, and a wee bit of slowdown. Otherwise, this is a great shooter, incorporating HUGE stage bosses, with henchmen that nearly fill every corner of the screen. I could see myself retiring this one after beating it, but not until I can beat it on one life. Yes, it's that good.

G 9 C 9 P 8 M 7 O 8 — 90

Unlike ECM, I don't have a shooter for breakfast every morning, but I still get a kick out of *G-Darius*. It's games like this which are quickly turning around the formerly bleak outlook of shooters on the PS. The bosses are great (though a little fishy), and the capture ball tremendously helps replay value. If you're a PlayStation shooter fiend and have played *Einhander* to death, pick up *G-Darius*. It's one of the best shooters to come along in a long while, and it doesn't suffer from Garegga's confusing debris problem.

G 8 C 9 P 9 M 8 O 8 — 92

This is one nice lookin' shooter. I have gotten pretty tired of this genre, but this puppy kept me playing. With 3-D backgrounds, killer graphics and some music with impact, *G-Darius* is a must for shooter fans. The bosses in this title are very impressive as well as the complement of weapons and their power-ups. Two player mode is a blast and will certainly keep you up until the wee hours of the morning. The fact that this game probably won't come out in the States is a shame. Stuff like this needs to be seen by the gaming public. You should fork out the dough for this stellar import.

G 10 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 7 — 91



G-Darius
Playstation
Taito
Shooter

Y' know, politics really get on my nerves when they apply to something as important as the games I play. For instance, SNK's refusal to use Capcom's buff new 4 Meg cart because they've been bitter rivals ever since SNK became a legitimate competitor (bagging a bunch of Capcom talent over the years didn't help that relationship much, either). Beyond the obvious drop in frames and the slightly annoying load times, it's another feather in SNK's "we never tire of bringing you more fighters" cap. At least I get a *Metal Slug* once every 3 yrs or so to stay me through the dry spells. In any event, a worthy purchase for all you SNK fanatics out there (especially those of the Shidoshi variety).

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 6 — 85

Well, another year another *KOF*. This time they seemed to have not given us what they should have. I guess SNK has the Japanese Mafia funding their projects because "HOW DO THEY HAVE SO MUCH MONEY?!" I just can't see how they can have the money to put out horrible conversions on systems better than their own! Yeah, it is decent, but I say KOF '97 on the Saturn is what *Samurai Slowdown III* was for the PlayStation. If you are a true SNK fan, then by all means get it. But be warned...

G 9 C 7 P 8 M 6 O 5 — 78

I've always enjoyed the *King of Fighters* series (though I still miss the American team from *KOF '94*...BRING THEM BACK!), and *KOF '97* is just another joy, though it's showing its age, and I don't mean in graphics. Much like all fighting sequels, we'll see new characters, new special moves, and even a new feature now and then. But, nothing really wows me with *KOF '97*. Apart from the handful of animation frames missing and the really long loading times, *KOF '97* is a very good translation, welcome in any fighters corner. And with SNK behind it (the king of the most fighters), you really can't go wrong.

G 8 C 9 P 7 M 7 O 7 — 82



King of Fighters '97
Saturn
SNK
Fighting

Woooh baby... this is a treat. While *Vampire Savior* wasn't a game I specialized in (to tell the truth, I sucked at the game), the Saturn version is mmm-hmmm, good. Lots of new moves, new characters, and nearly all the animation, I really can't bad mouth this solid conversion from the arcade. My only gripe? Well, the RAM cart is exclusive, so only the *X-men Vs. Street Fighter* RAM cart is compatible, or the RAM cart that comes along with *Vampire Savior*. Another cool feature is the ability to play in ENGLISH (see more in the full review... thanks D.L.). Again, a sorrow comes over me as most gamers won't see this on their Saturn, since most Saturns are being melted down for some new experimental fuel.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 9 O 9 — 91

Provided you get the RAM cart, the Saturn version is a great translation of the arcade. But, unless I'm mistaken, *VS* made a tiny ripple in the pond of arcade money-making success. Still, it's a Capcom 2D fighter so you know all the moves, gameplay, and original character design (in the *Darkstalker* series) will be there. And you can't beat Little Red Riding Hood with a machine gun and fuzzy animal sidekick in a fighting game. I'm just worried that most of you will be saying, "*Darkstalkers 3*? They made a *3*?"

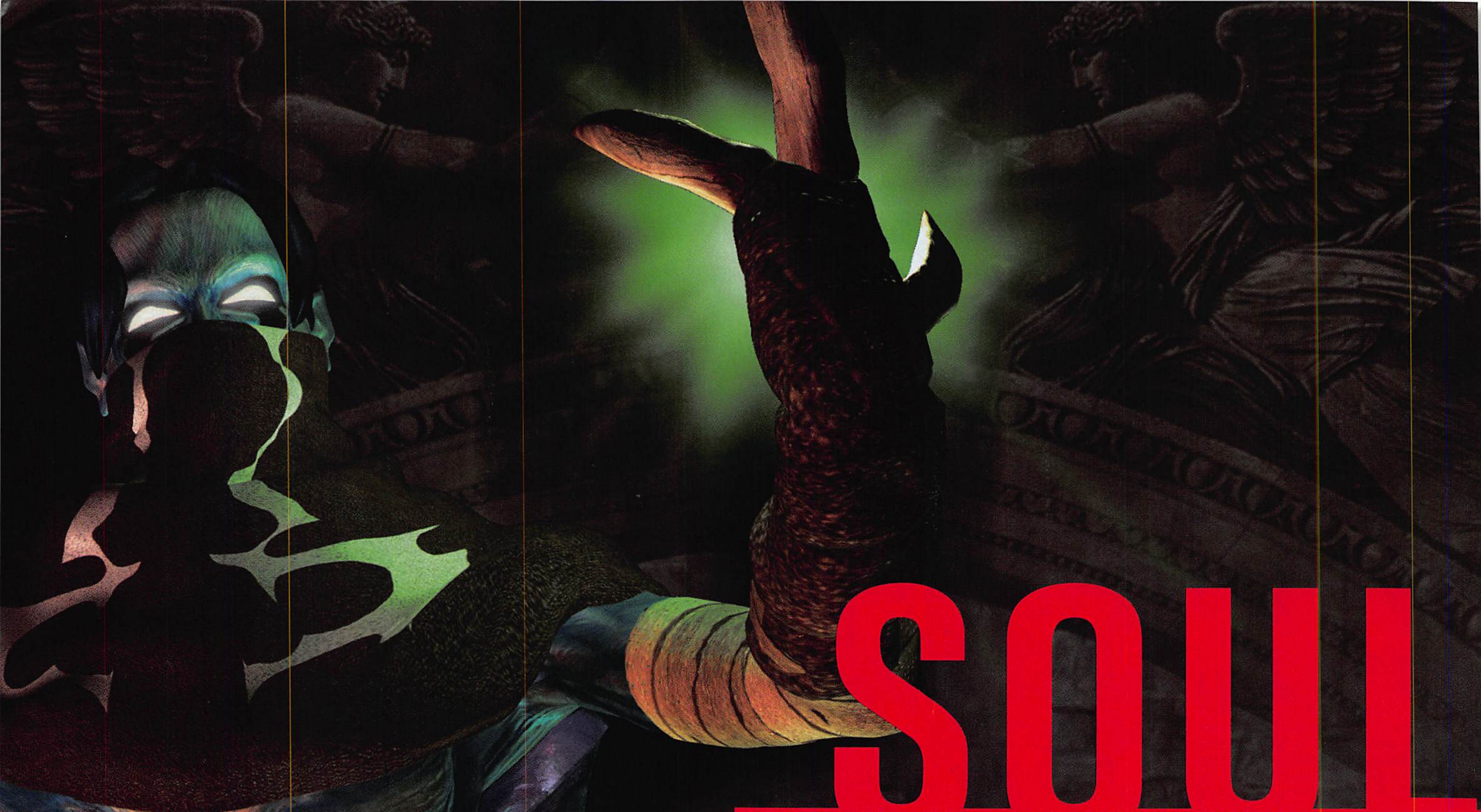
G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 — 85

Well, at least the Saturn has some hope. Not since *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* have I sat there in awe wondering, "How do they do that?" The answer my friend is CAPCOM! I am not a fighting fanatic, but as long as I have been playing video games, nothing, and I mean nothing prepared me for this! "Don't think it can happen..." I told myself, but here it is in all its love and splendor. I played it and played it until my thumbs bled. Everything is here, and you will definitely get your moneys worth. Hey, if you still have a Saturn then I really suggest you pick this one up, if you haven't already. As the saying here goes: "Arcade perfect joy for sixty bucks..."

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 7 — 85



Vampire Savior
Saturn
Capcom
Fighting



SOUL

SOUL SEARCHING

An in-depth look at Crystal Dynamics newest epic gothic adventure

Recently, GameFan was educated on the finer points of one of the most anticipated sequels of 1998. We were given a guided tour through the inner sanctum of Crystal Dynamics' *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* and given plenty of insights into what could become one of the most epic gaming masterpieces of the year (PS or otherwise).

Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver is the sequel to *Legacy of Kain: Blood Omen*, the worldwide smash hit that sold over 500,000 copies on the PlayStation last year. Last year we hopped on the *Kain* bandwagon early and this year we're driving the bandwagon as we are not only fired up about this game but we'll sell our collective souls to play it early—it's that incredible. It looks beautiful with a very intense story and the potential to become one of the best action adventures ever created. Here is a taste of the back story and what you can expect when you sit down to play *Kain 2* later this year:

Kain sits on high at his capital in the ruins of the pillars of Nosgoth. Formulating a plan to become a dark god, Kain sets in motion a plan to conquer the world. To that end, he creates a cadre of six vampiric lieutenants.

Raziel (the protagonist, so to speak) and Kain's other five lieutenants spread like a plague, devouring all that opposed them with vampiric armies and their massed might. Those that weren't devoured were changed to serve the ruling vampire tribes. Over the course of centuries, the human race was decimated and the world fell completely under Kain's sway. They erected Nosgoth (a temple), where they held court over the remains of the once-proud world. After a thousand years Kain grew bored and complacent—he and his lieutenants withdrew to the mountains to leave the vampire tribes to do as they wished.

"When you create a vampire in our world, it's

THE LEGACY OF KAIN II

a little bit different than Anne Rice. You don't just suck their blood and infect them with this vampire disease," said Jim Currie, marketing manager at Crystal Dynamics. "A vampire like Kain finds a dead body and breathes a little bit of his soul into it. It's the kiss of undeath, if you will. That little bit of soul animates the body and creates the vampire. Raziel was a dead body until Kain breathed a little life into him, or unlife, if you will."

They enjoyed their esoteric life as high-order vampires. Things were good until one day Raziel had the audacity to evolve beyond Kain. In this Soul Reaver world, vampires mutate and evolve. Over the course of time, Raziel developed wings and that irked the mighty Kain. He didn't have wings and Kain felt it wasn't right for one of his lieutenants to get wings before he did. To punish Raziel, Kain ripped his wings off and threw him down into this bottomless vortex of water. Water and vampires don't mix; it's like acid and humans.

"Raziel was thrown down into the vortex and was screaming and melting—writhing in pain incarnate, if you will. When you are in that much pain, you lose a sense of time and reality," said Currie. "So who knows for how long he had been falling, when he suddenly realized he was no longer in pain and could hear the Elder speaking to him."

The Elder is an ancient god who resides in the center of Nosgoth. Far older than Kain, far older than any vampire, he feeds on souls. Because the vampire empire in Nosgoth has trapped human souls in their corpses, the

SEA NG



Elder isn't receiving any sustenance; he is enraged and very hungry. He strikes a deal with Raziel: He will let Raziel egress to the material plane if Raziel brings him some souls and takes vengeance against Kain. His other task is to rid the world of vampires so the Elder can eat.

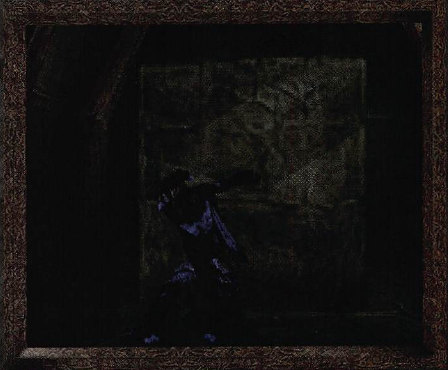
"So Raziel thinks his first reason for living is payback and is on a mission of vengeance. His experience of self-discovery is unexpected and shocking or interesting depending on your perspective," Currie said. "As Raziel, you go throughout the game discovering more and more about who he was before Kain turned him into a vampire. Players discover [Kain's] first act was to recruit a cadre. Dipping into the underworld, Kain snared six souls and made them lieutenants of which Raziel, the character you control, was one."

This time around there are no load times, the story is rich and there are plenty of new gameplay experiences that unfold. If you weren't afraid of the dark before, you will be after you play this game!

A good mix of technology, game design, and attention to detail will keep action adventure fans lining up to get their hands on Soul Reaver. This is one spine-tingling adventure that will enrapture your soul! ***VC***





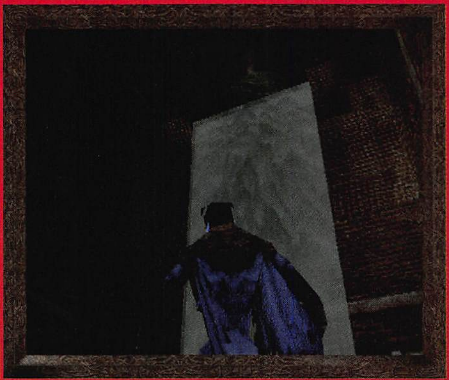


P PREVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYNAMICS
PUBLISHER - TBA
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - OCTOBER



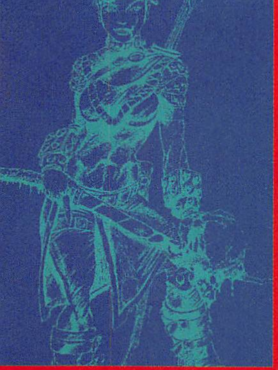
VIDEO COWBOY
"Garlic, garlic, has anyone seen the garlic?"






INTERVIEW WITH THE KAIN TEAM



GF: What are the advances in story and where did you take *Kain 2: Soul Reaver?*

Crystal Dynamics: The philosophy that we had for this game is at the end of *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* the players had two options: They could sacrifice themselves to restore balance and everything would be fine or they could choose to rule the world as dark gods. We decided that it would be more interesting if you could rule the world as dark gods. Okay, now you are a dark god, what do you do? You wake up the next morning and you are all-powerful. It didn't seem to us that it would make a very interesting adventure game. We didn't want to make it into a military or vampire sim-city-like game where we showed Kain conquering Nosgoth. We wanted to maintain the very eerie ambiance that we built up with *Blood Omen*. Our solution for that was to move the game thousands of years into the future and let Kain's vampire empire shape Nosgoth—and to have changed and evolved Nosgoth into a very different world that would reflect the very different look and feel that the game would have. The technology that we are using right now is so different than the technology that was used in *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* that we felt that the story needed to evolve as far as the technology. That was one of our very big goals and I think we managed to achieve it.

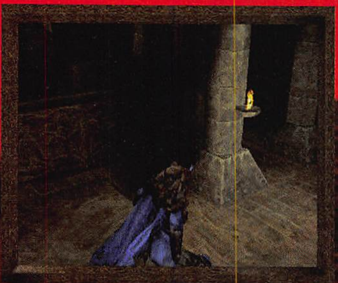
GF: What type of a game is *Soul Reaver*?

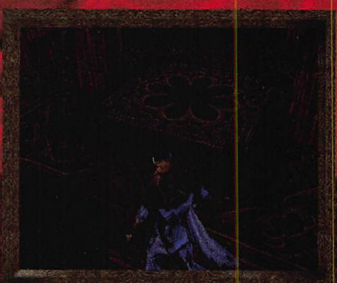
CD: It's an adventure with some strong role-playing game elements. The line between adventure and role-playing games is always tough. A lot of time on console games, role-playing games are only RPGs because you don't have interactive combat. We have interactive combat, so does that make us an adventure game? It's tough to say, but there is character development like in an RPG, there is also real-time combat. We have a unique combination of the two, depth with some arcadey twitchy action.

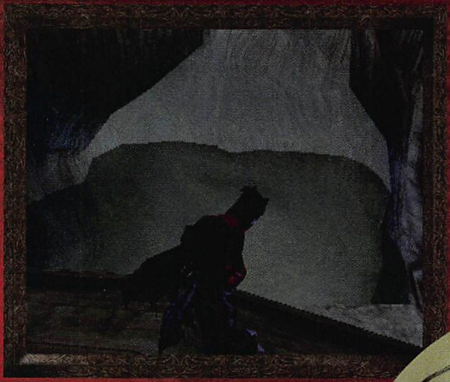
There's a couple of different things about the combat in *Soul Reaver*. First of all, you can pick up weapons in any environment. For example, Raziel has a spear and you can use the weapons you find to defeat the vampires. The vampires are wily, they're tough and they are smart. You can't just beat them senseless and absorb their souls. You have to use things in the environment—like weapons, or sunlight or water—to help overcome them. In a sense, fighting is like a puzzle: You have one vampire boss—how do you defeat him? You figure it out and decide you have to pick him up and throw him in the water, then you have to figure out a way to use the elements in the environment, like break a fence and use a piece of the fence as a weapon. The environment is interactive in this game and you have to be on the lookout. There are a couple of different elements to combat. There's hand-to-hand grappling: Raziel can throw people, he can punch them, he can pick up objects in the environment, like spears, rocks or blocks and he can push them on people or throw them at the vampires; he can use tools and weapons. He also has the ability to cast spells when he progresses throughout the game; for example, he comes to these glyphs (symbol or rune). Once Raziel obtains the glyph he can then use it to cast a spell, he draws it in the air and that evokes the power and the spell is then cast.

GF: Can you talk a little bit about the technology and the advances that you have made in *Kain 2*?

CD: Crystal Dynamics has had many years of experience with 3D games. Our first 3D product was a baseball game and our learning curve for 3D started way back then in 1984. That game gave us an advantage and the knowledge on how to do things well. For example, the single skin technology that we are utilizing with this game was the







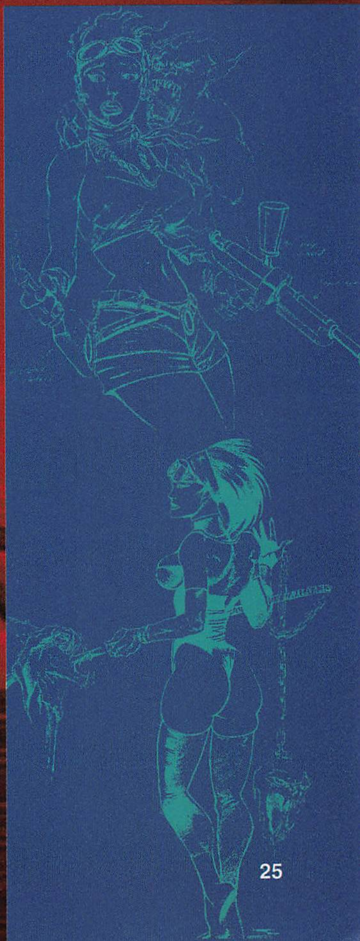

catalyst behind it and that was *3D Baseball*. What the single skin allows us to do is to eliminate the sorting problem with the joints so it looks like an organic creature, not crappy little polygons all strung together. Raziel has a skeleton and his skeleton is divided into two parts—the upper body and the lower body—and both body parts can be shifted independently which gives them a very natural look and feel. When he picks up a weapon, the weapon becomes a bone that is attached to Raziel so it is very easy to interact with objects, we just have to code them correctly. Obviously the software Z-buffering is something that comes with experience with 3D products. Variable lighting and all of the those effects are a function of our technology but they are also a function of how we are building the team and building the game. The game designers on *Soul Reaver* are architects, literally. We have taken people who have just finished school as architects or people from architectural firms and hired them and they are building the game. We also have people from art school who act as the designers, so the team was built that was good with art and visual stuff.

GF: How then are you able to take the designers' artistic abilities and marry that with the technology?
CD: The tools that we have enable us to do that. If you look at *Tomb Raider 2*, their tools only allowed them to build blocky areas. We use tools that allow us to create any type of environment, notice all of the arches and all of the columns with smooth corners and no jagged edges. If you can imagine something, you can build it with our tools and it's giving our designers that level of freedom that has allowed them to realize their visions in this environment.

GF: What will gamers notice besides the look of *Soul Reaver* and what type of feedback did gamers have as far as some of the common themes they wanted addressed in a sequel?
CD: I think a fairly universal issue was load times. People weren't too keen on all of those load times and neither were we. When we built this game, we wanted to make sure that we eliminated load times.

A key part of this engine is streaming—all of the data is streamed off of the CD, so there is seamless loading between all of the areas. You don't have to worry about any intrusive stops—where the ominous loading phase takes place—and that philosophy, we carried throughout the game. People were pretty keen about the story elements of *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain* and we think story is important. However, we don't want to have the disc being accessed in the middle of gameplay to load full-motion video or animation and pull the gamer out of the story. In the beginning of the game we will have full-motion animation to set the story. At the end we'll have full-motion animation to conclude the story, the story will be delivered to the players with voice-overs and the in-character models. They never have to leave the world that they are in to get part of the story and that is very important to us. An extension of that thought is player death. Raziel is immortal, you cannot kill him. Our thinking behind that was, you are playing an adventure game that is very large and epic and you die. What do you do? Do you go to the memory card and go to three or four different load screens—hitting the disc all of the time… That is a bunch of BS. It's an artificial constraint that we didn't think needed to be there, so we decided to build Raziel's immortality into the mythology. The main reason Raziel is immortal is so you don't have to load.

He needs energy, energy from souls. For him to exist on the material plane—that takes energy. In order to survive, he needs to go and get some souls to eat. As long as he does that and maintains that energy he stays in the material world, as soon as he loses that energy he is pushed down into the spectral plane. Now the spectral plane gives the player a couple of advantages. First of all, it effectively doubles the gameplay area. Every area that exists in the material realm has a corresponding area in the spectral realm and Raziel can go between the realms at will. The player sees that as a real-time morph or shift between the planes, a very cool effect that doubles gameplay, and it allows Raziel to have that immortal role. So he gets all of his energy knocked out of him in the material world and goes to the spectral plane. If he has even more energy knocked out of him, he goes to the Elder (the guy who allowed him to exist as an avenging angel).



GF: What is the object of the game?
CD: The object of the game is to extract vengeance from Kain and it is an experience of self discovery for Raziel. A couple of interesting dynamics of the game: A new mechanic of the game is what I like to call the "Glide Mechanic."





Raziel used to have wings, but Kain ripped them off before he threw him down the vortex, but the sad remnants of wings remain. You can get Raziel to grab the stubs and jump off a high place and parasail or glide through the air. We spent a lot of time tuning the physics so it doesn't only look good, but if you perfect this technique you will be able to use this dynamic to get to places you will need to reach.

All of the abilities that you get in this game will become innate. You will gain new skills when you go through an area. For example when you defeat a vampire boss, you will gain a skill when you inhale their soul. Much like *Highlander* or the weird cannibal theory—according to mythology, if you ate the brain of your enemy, you gained their knowledge. In this case when you inhale their soul, you gain their special skill. In the game you will come across a race of vampires that can live in water and on land. Once you suck the soul of that boss, you can swim. When you can swim, you can go back to areas of the game that had water and suddenly go into that area again and have a new gameplay experience.

A hub system we're using keeps players going back to places that they have been before because they realize that they can do something new. That was not evident in the first product and we brought that new dynamic into this game. There are no menu screens or loading screens; all of the skills that Raziel obtains become innate. For example, once you can swim, you don't have to cast a swim spell. Once you can cast a glyph spell, you have to flip through several glyphs to get to the one that you want, but they are a button press away.

Like most spells the glyphs seem to be elemental—focusing on one basic building block of life. A water-based glyph will allow you to have a water-based attack. You don't have to go into a special menu and then another menu. These spells are right at your fingertips. It's not like you have to worry about your spell or your magic meter, it's not keeping track of your mana or anything like that. They are based on elemental powers: learning the sunlight glyph so that you can summon this area-effect spell that blinds all of the enemies in the area and stuns them momentarily—that kind of thing. There are no layers, we wanted the game to be very intuitive and easy to use. I think that it's more accessible than the original *Kain* gaming interface.

What we want to provide for the player is an experience where the story, the symbology, the environments and the voice-acting combine to provide a vicarious experience of being this character with an interesting back story, not just being a gun-toting murderer.

The other thing you can do because you are a creature of spirit is take material form. You can't carry a bunch of inventory with you, instead you have to use what is at hand. If you need to impale a vampire, you will need to find something to impale him with. You can't do it with your bare hands—well I guess you can, but when you take them out, the vampire will no longer be impaled. You have to search out impaling elements. There's going to be staves around as well as other weapons. Against fire monsters, you can use water... For example, if you see a picket fence, you can break the fence, grab one of the pickets and skewer a vampire with it. If you see a lightning rod on a building, you can use that too. The game is interactive in a sense that you can use elements from it as weapons that you can carry around and you can carry them throughout the game or you can use it against an enemy and discard it. You can also pick up the enemies and grapple with them and throw them into fatal elements. That same fence is sitting there crooked on the ground, you can grab a guy and fling him off of a rooftop and impale him on the fence. If you find a torch, you can carry it around and use it as a weapon, as vampires are very flammable. Even better you can throw your enemy onto a bonfire, if you have that opportunity. You can also grapple with them and move them into the sunlight so they burn.

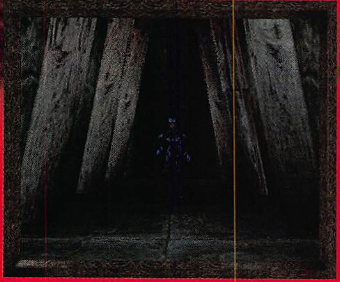
[Also], there are seven glyph spells with six Soul Reaver forges.

GF: How many hours of gameplay does *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver* have?
CD: It's tough to say, right now the game is going to be bigger than *Gex*, plus there's the spectral plane which doubles the play area and gives you an entirely new element to explore. Maybe 40 to 80 hours; if you burn right through the game it won't take you that long at all. But if you go and explore it could take you longer. I think you have seen with *Tomb Raider* and with *Gex* that it really depends on the player and his gaming preferences and experiences as to how long it will take someone to finish a game. There's a couple of things you will need to look for. First of all you will need to find things that will enable you to continue with the quest and keep you moving forward in the game. There are also other things you can look for. The game has a lot of rich detail, graphically. But if you look at it and study it, the look of the game also tells a story. You will find out what type of person or creature Raziel was before he became a vampire. It's a very rich game and there are many levels that you can play it at. There are five vampire bosses and Kain is the final boss.

GF: What is different about the artificial intelligence in *Soul Reaver*?
CD: In a lot of games, you tend to have stupid enemies. The enemies become aware of you, they rush towards you and you kill them. I'm not saying *Spawn* (for the PlayStation) is like that kind of game, but in some games the enemies are a little weak. What we wanted to do with our game is we wanted to build some mystery and suspense into it. Let's say you come upon the weakest vampire there is, a Skinner. The vampire sees you, he doesn't do a stupid suicidal frontal attack, he turns and runs away. You think, "Right on, I am going to go catch up to him, beat him and steal his soul." As it turns out, he runs into a room where he knows there are two of his buddies. So now there are three vampires to defeat. They don't run away, they attack you and they don't do frontal attacks. They surround you from all sides and attack you like hyenas they are smart. That's the AI that we are programming in.

We want them to behave like pack animals, like crafty dangerous animals... not like a bunch of deer caught in someone's headlights or zombies. Something else we are doing that is pretty damn cool is what we like to call "Reap what you sow." There are only a few humans left in this world living in weird little communities. They are very scared because vampires have not been kind to them. Raziel can go into that village and interact with the humans, get their souls very easily, and feed on them or you can kill vampires that are attacking them and be nice to the humans. If you are nice to the humans and protect them they will be nice to you, they will actually worship you as a god. But if you start killing them, the humans will

SOUL REA














attack you.

GF: What is the boss structure, how did they evolve, and how did you come up with them?

CD: There are more boss encounters than there are individual bosses, probably because you encounter Kain a couple of times in the game. Like any good nemesis, he usually shows up more than once in the game. There are five clans of empires that have broken into different factions; they have different characteristics and different abilities. You have to battle four vampire clan leaders of the five clans—one is no longer in the picture—and there is one human boss that you encounter. You see Kain three times in the game. In all, there are 12 individual boss creatures you encounter.

GF: What are some of your interests? Are you into vampires? How did you arrive at this totally complex story?

CD: We have great deal of other artistic pursuits and our interests are incredibly varied. We have a massive library that isn't just art reference which includes horror, science fiction, mythology, symbology, Biblical mythology, all of that kind of Joseph Campbell-like swamp of mythological reference that we draw on. A lot of it is different art styles like expressionism and all of the different artistic pursuits that we share that has brought us into this centrifuge. We are good sounding boards for each other, we bounce our ideas off of each other and if we both have this empathic experience where we smile and both go "Yeah!" then we are pretty sure that we are onto something.

GF: What games have you played that have influenced you in the making of *Soul Reaver*?

CD: If you look at *Metroid* and *Zelda* and games of that sort, there is a structure. Those designers kept those games very organic and expansive. Those games evolved on their own. Instead of sending a player out on a linear path, we are giving them a hub of a world with spokes coming off of it. Some of which they can approach now or they can choose to approach later, just like *Metroid* and *Zelda* did. As you grow as a character inside the game, you get new abilities and you can utilize those abilities to help your character get out of precarious situations later as you proceed in the game. The spokes coming off become new hubs and you have this organic growth that stems from the character's growth.

The goals of the game are similar to those of other action RPGs. The first goal you start with is similar to your goal in *Kain*: You've been wronged, you're pissed off and you want some payback and you are given the means to do it. And not only that, you are driven, as Kain was in the first game, by this new intense hunger. In this case instead of a hunger for blood, it's hunger for souls and you can't continue to survive without it. Driven by those first two things you start out on your quest. Along the way you have to work your way through the various clans of vampires to get to Kain. That is your ultimate goal. By defeating the clan leaders you acquire new abilities by defeating them and ingesting their souls: if that boss had the ability to scale walls, swim, become transparent and be able to walk through walls or barriers. Just like in *Zelda*, [where] Link would get the running shoes or the flippers. All of these things help you to get to your ultimate goal and that is a showdown with Kain.

At a point in the game you actually win the Soul Reaver from Kain and it becomes your primary weapon. It gets altered in your altercation with Kain, so it's different than it was in the first game. It gets destroyed in your battle with Kain. You, being a creature of the spirit world, are able to use it in its spirit form, in its wraith form, and it becomes your soul weapon. It becomes tied to you—it's an energy blade, a default power—and it becomes available to you when you are at full energy, otherwise it is dormant. What you can do with it throughout the game though—and this is an example of secondary areas that you don't have to visit but you can—you can find these elemental forges and forge the primal blade with these element's sunlight forge and you can basically baptize the blade with sunlight, which allows you, later, whenever you find a source of sunlight, to recharge your blade. There are multiples of these elemental forges strewn throughout the game, including stone and fire. They are off the beaten track; you might even play the game all the way through without finding them. They are not gating items, they don't impede your progress, but they allow you to complete the game with more variety and more power.

GF: What message do you want gamers to come away with after they experience *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*?

CD: The shock value, with gore and blood that we had in the first game, isn't what we are after here in the second game. We aren't after a media message either. Look at any classic art painting and you are left with a message that the artist wants you to explore, and they leave it open-ended. It's free expression, we aren't trying to send any messages. What we want to provide for the player is an experience where the story, the symbology, the environments and the voice-acting combine to provide a vicarious experience of being this character with an interesting back story, not just being a gun-toting murderer. Being in these environments that use symbols to evoke a kind of a religious symbolism that evokes associations with the player. The music in the game comes from middle eastern influences so we are really trying to give a non-traditional game play experience in a traditional genre. We are trying to create an immersive experience where they can become this intriguing character and within that be moving, suspenseful, frightening and symbolic—all of those things, as well as being a good game.

We don't want to overstate this to the point where gamers think they are getting a treatise on man's inhumanity to man. We aren't going to be packing this game with overt philosophy or anything like that. It's just taking a more proud aesthetic approach to our work as opposed to us just hacking it out. We are taking it very seriously and are working very hard to create a game with a cool story that is fun to play. We want gamers to come away feeling that they got their money's worth. The same type of feeling when you walk out of a good movie as opposed to the feelings you have when you walk out of a crummy movie. We want them to feel like they have memories of places that they wouldn't have otherwise seen or experienced. We want to capture gamers' imaginations and make them feel part of a world and, in a perverse way, we want them to feel sad that it's done. We want them to want more, like when you read a really good book and you don't want it to end and you get pissed off when its over. That's how into this game we want players to be.



Steve Groll
public relations manager



Jim Currie
marketing manager



Steve Groll, pr manager, left and **Jim Currie**, show off Soul Reaver



Amy Hennig and Seth Carus





BANJO KAZOOIE







We here at *GameFan* love to give the people what they want; and we know you want the scoop on Nintendo's *Banjo-Kazooie*. Well, Nintendo was in our offices for a couple of days this week (accompanied by burly bodyguards and ravenous dogs—they don't fool around on the security issue) and we got a chance to play this much-anticipated title to death. If you could see me right now, you'd see I was smilin'. *Banjo*'s got everything that an N64 gamer could possibly want. From graphics and sound, to dead-on playability and depth, this is one title that will leave a mark.



So what starts this adventure rolling? Well, the sinister witch Broomhilda does her best Evil Queen, asking her cauldron who the "fairest of them all" is. Apparently, word on the street was that Banjo's girlfriend, Piccolo, was the hottest, so Broomhilda did what any self respecting ugly and dejected slag would do: kidnapped her. With the help of his nutty bird buddy, Kazooie, Banjo heads out into the mysterious world to discover what happened to his kidnapped little sister.

Banjo-Kazooie was developed by Rare, who you just might remember were responsible for the best N64 game to date: *GoldenEye*. This title is no less impressive. *Banjo-Kazooie,* essentially, is *Mario 64* with a facelift. With nine huge worlds to explore and a cast of characters that read like a James Ellroy novel (Ed's note: for the clueless [including yours truly], he writes novels with a lot of characters—we're talkin' biblical proportions here), *Banjo* exhibits great depth and personality that has been missing from most Nintendo 64 titles.

Graphically, the game is simply beautiful. With a look that resembles that of *Donkey Kong Country*, the levels are lush and dazzling. Whether huffing it down the

P PREVIEW

NINTENDO64

DEVELOPER - RARE	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - NINTENDO	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - JUNE '98



EL NIÑO
More fun than Mario...







sandy beaches of Treasure Trove Cove, or spelunking in the dark of Clanker's Cavern, you will marvel at the look of the scenery and its denizens. Some of the cooler encounters are with a giant mechanical whale (or is that thing a shark? the verdict is still out on that), bullying hermit crab and corpulent walrus. The great news is that the textures are varied and don't repeat into infinity.

The music is as sickeningly sweet and catchy as in many of Nintendo's more memorable titles. Managing to rise above the machine's cumbersome sound handicap, *Banjo*'s score will haunt you in your dreams and have you toe-tappin' all the way through the game.

Like *Mario 64*, *Banjo*'s gameplay is the best that can be had. The fully 3-D environment and dynamic camera angles allow you freedom, unparalleled, and the list of moves that both Banjo and Kazooie can perform are perfect. Both protagonists have a set of specific abilities that can be used to help the team (like in *DK3* and *Lost Vikings*), like Kazooie's ability to climb steep embankments and shoot eggs, or Banjo's ability to do that atomic butt-drop on enemies that Mario was so good at...

As the game progresses, you learn new moves with the help of your pal, the mole. These skills aren't just handed out (you think this is a free ride?), so expect to have to fulfill a couple of requirements before being

























blessed with the gift of, say... flight.

What's really great about *Banjo*, however, is the fact that the level structure is in no way linear. For instance, in *Mario 64*, you generally know where to go from level to level. It was almost as if Miyamoto designed the game in some way to preserve the classic 2D gameplay that the *Mario* games always promised. *Banjo* does not play like that. Instead, the levels are almost entirely free-form. What this means is that the levels offer an unprecedented amount of freedom, not ever seen in a 3D game. There is, generally, no specific order in completing a level, with each one requiring any number of unique puzzles that will have you wrackin' your noggin.

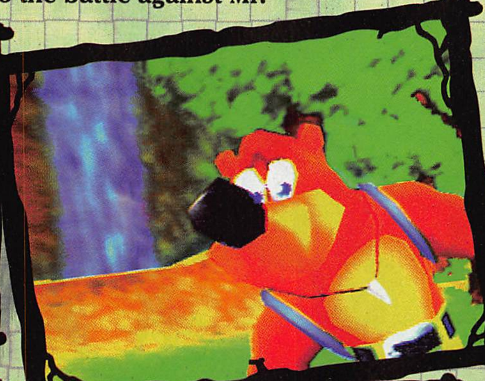




Along with all this positive, there are a few flies in the honey pot: The game is MUCH more difficult than *Mario* ever was. This game would give a certain overweight plumber a heart condition. It's not in the control department, but simply in the difficulty of the levels themselves (wait until you get to the battle against Mr.









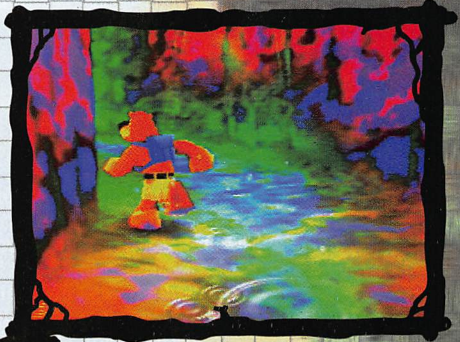


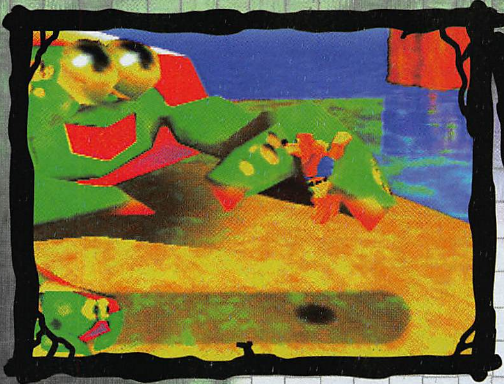


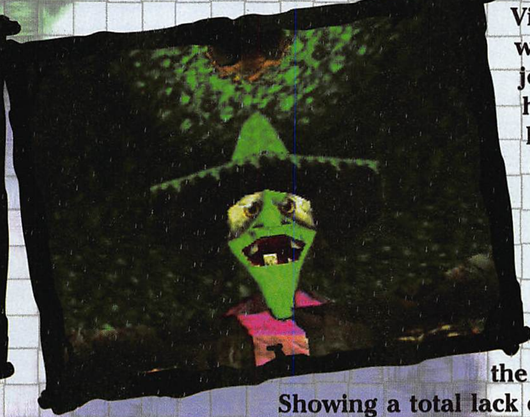










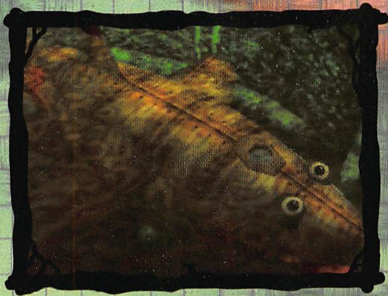




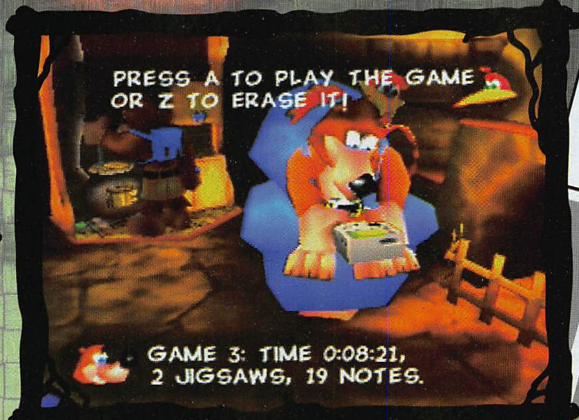
Vile... that little monster will pay with his life!). And while game jocks will eat it up, the more, how shall I say, scrub-like, may have some issues with the difficulty level; any game that features a big, dopey bear in its lead role and is really hard, is a wolf in sheep's clothing—I can hear little Jimmy crying already... (though, I figure this will be rectified before the final... I hope).

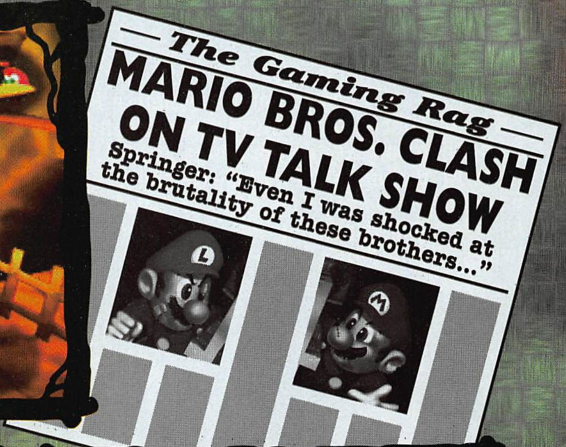
Showing a total lack of originality, ***B-K*** offers up the same type of items as in all platform titles. You've got the musical notes that, when you reach 100, reward you with an extra life. There are puzzle pieces which allow you access to the next part of the game as well as Mumbo Tokens and Jingo Birds which will help your cause by increasing your life and such. They look different than the hearts and mushrooms of platformers past, but they function the same. I guess if it ain't broke, don't fix it, right?

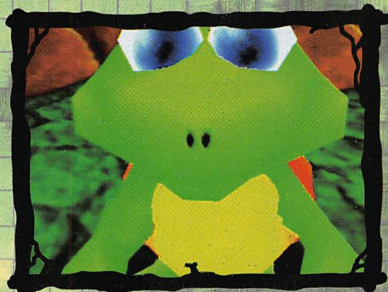
The big picture is a pretty one, when you come right down to it. I actually enjoyed ***Banjo-Kazooie*** more than ***Mario 64***, if that gives you an impression as to how much fun it is. My only problem with this title would be the issue of replayability, once you've finished it. Rare claims that, even if you know the whole game by heart, it will still take over fifteen hours to complete, so it looks as though it might take you some time to bump into this problem... unless of course you're a game ninja. ***EN***







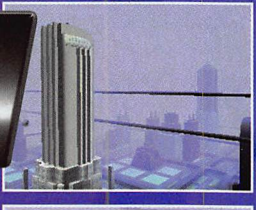


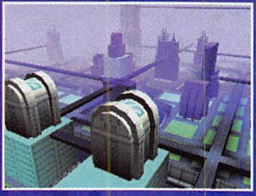






SUPERMAN



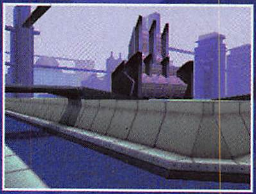




We're not worthy! The first shots of *Superman* on N64 flew into GameFan recently, and to say I'm thrilled is a slight understatement. All the fanboys in the office are drooling over these first-look shots at the game, and it seems like a sure-bet that Titus has their biggest hit yet with the Man of Steel.



Check out the fully polygonal animated series-style Supes and fully polygonal Metropolis and start getting really antsy and impatient with us on this one. In any event, this could be one of the hotter N64 titles of the year even with heavyweights like *Zelda* and *Banjo* coming down the line (hey, given a choice between playing some crazy bear or an odd little elf, I'll take the big 'S' anyday)





Expect some really hot 3D *Superman* action, as he cruises over Metropolis on an assortment of missions numbering in the twenties. Villains to be featured include Brainiac, Bizarro, and of course, Lex Luthor (where would Superman be without Lex?). Utilize Supes' repertoire of powers to deal with each of them and save Lois Lane, among other things (and where would Superman be without having to constantly rescue Lois?). X-Ray and Heat Vision will play a role as well as, obviously, flight, in and around Metropolis (Little-Known-Fact Alert: Metropolis is located in the state of Maryland in the DC Universe, believe it or not).

Graphically, it's astounding, with clean textures and smooth animation. Looking beyond the somewhat obtrusive fog in some of the shots (What do ya want?! Miracles?), this game looks set to raise the bar on the N64 again, simply by virtue of the fact that it looks just like the cartoon, extruded into a shiny new 3D universe. Comic (and cartoon) fans can't afford to miss this one. ***ECM***

P PREVIEW | **NINTENDO 64**

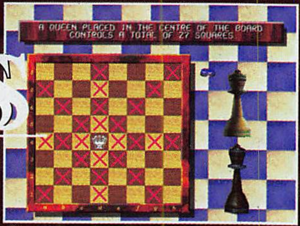
DEVELOPER - TITUS
PUBLISHER - TITUS
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE
OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - N/A
AVAILABLE - TO BE ANNOUNCED



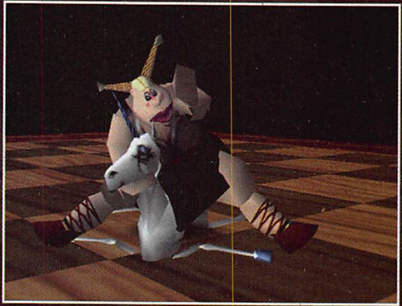
ECM
It's a bird, it's a plane, no it's... Kid Fan?!

VIRTUAL CHESS



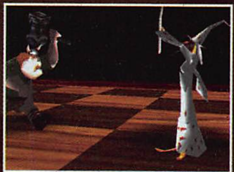


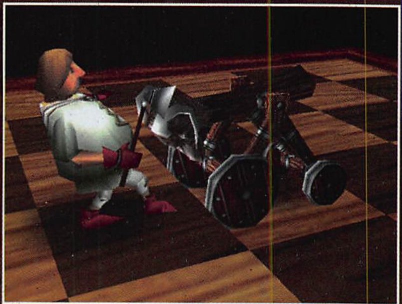
Think back to the days of Commodore's Amiga. Then think back to the early days of Interplay, before *Boogerman* and *Earthworm Jim*. Recall a nifty little piece of software named *Battle Chess*. It sold like hotcakes on the Amiga and PC, and even found its way to the 3DO at some point. Well, welcome to the nineties and now we have *Virtual Chess* on the N64 from Titus. Taking Interplay's venerable idea and expanding upon it, Titus is hoping lightning strikes twice. *Battle Chess* was a fun little game, but after you saw all the various animations (especially when the rook ate the pawns and such), what was exposed beneath was a mostly lackluster chess sim. Sure it had all the parts, but the AI was on the weak side and generally chess fanatics went running back to *Chess Master* in droves (the hard core chess gamers' title of choice—if you can call chess fanatics hard core). That's where *Virtual Chess* picks up the ball. Sure it has nice, N64-style 3D animations, but the actual chess AI is quite solid and most enjoyable.



While this is only a preview this looks to be the premier chess title coming to the N64 (though, I guess that's not saying much seeing as how it's the only one). We'll be back with more on Titus' *Virtual Chess* in the near future, till then better get that pocket protector buffed.







P PREVIEW | **NINTENDO 64**

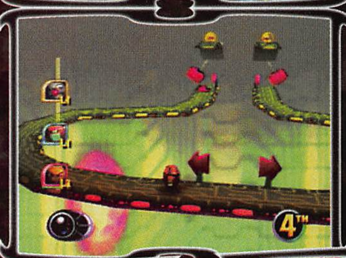
DEVELOPER - TITUS
PUBLISHER - TITUS
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE
OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW



ECM
It's a bird, it's a plane, no it's... Kid fan?!







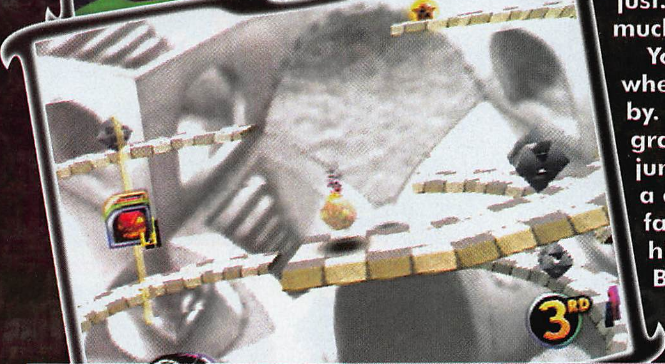
IGGY'S reckin' balls











You know, I've always wanted to be something... different. Something wild and zany which you'd never expect like a... wrecking ball. That's right, a wrecking ball—as in one of those large, dull weights swung around on cranes to demolish buildings. But it's not cool to be the only wrecking ball out there, you need... fans... no, competition. Wreckin' ball: the Olympic sport? No, not timely. You need a race. Yeah, a race full of wreckin' balls climbing their way to the top of a building in order to bring it down. Now we're talking.

But since these balls are gonna be climbing, they'll need arms...? No, wreckin' balls don't have arms. Chains! "Use your chains!" No, I think that's been done before. I got it, an extendable, metallic appendage to pull yourself up. Now our wreckin' balls need a little personality. How about giving them wacky faces like those Mad Balls (remember that toy from the '80s?). Put it all together, and you have *Iggy's Reckin' Balls*, the most original game on the N64 to date. It defies classification: a combination of vertical racing (yes, vertical) with combat (weapons and powerups) and platform elements (jumping and swinging).

The courses in *IRB* have to be seen to be believed. Imagine scaling one of over 100 different towers, complete with moving floors, teleporters, loop-de-loops, enemies, fans (to blow you off), and more. Graphically, the courses are incredible (I can't believe someone designed over 100 of these). And the colors are just... well look at the screenshots. Lastly, the ball design has as much personality and variety as the rest of the game.

Your expected analog control is simply a joy—and a necessity when you see some of the jumps and climbs you'll need to get by. Controls consist of a special weapon trigger, jump, and grapple buttons. In order to grapple up a floor, you have to jump to get more air. For the truly vertically challenged, there's a combination jump and grapple button (shoulder). When you factor in the multi-player aspect (up to four simultaneous), the hidden characters and courses, different play modes (Arcade, Battle, Versus, Time Trial, and Game Mix-Up Tournament), there's simply no reason not to buy this game. That's if you've got the huevos to handle it, of course. *E*

R REVIEW

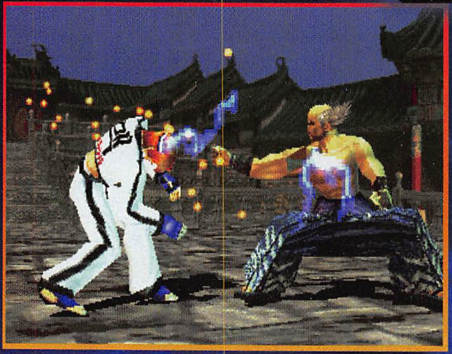
NINTENDO64

DEVELOPER - IGUANA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-4
PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT -CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - NOW



EGGO
This game is swingin', I reckin...





I was a little worried when I started playing an early version of *Tekken 3*. If you read my preview, you know that I didn't get that jolt of excitement from the third installment, like I did from the second. I recant... big time. After that, Reubus and I really began to play it and had one helluva time, too. Match after match, we were discovering new moves and gnarly combos. I can't remember the amount of times one of us cried out at some surprise that the game had in store for us. *Tekken 3* not only one-ups its predecessor in fighting technique, it also includes some great new modes of play that add a level of depth to the game that is only outclassed by the likes of *Tobal 2*.

Some of the more hard-core fighting gamers have complained that *Tekken 2* lacked the necessary depth and carelessly added characters that were unbalanced (hello Jun). Problem solved. The number of moves that any given character can perform has been increased (more grapples!) and all of the characters are evenly matched, with the exception of Eddy, who may be the cheapest character ever included in a fighting game.

How did Namco level the playing field? With the exception of a select few, every character has two reversal moves (one high and one low) to counter attacks. Also, each character's balance of strength, speed, and reach have been tweaked.

Tekken 3 also benefits from a sleeker fighting engine. The speed of combat is far faster than in *Tekken 2* and the motion capture is much more extensive and fluid. There's still a problem with polygon break-up and some z-buffering issues when grappling, though.

Adding to the strategic element of the game, this time around players can move in the z-axis, enabling attacks from the left and right. These attacks are unblockable, but do no



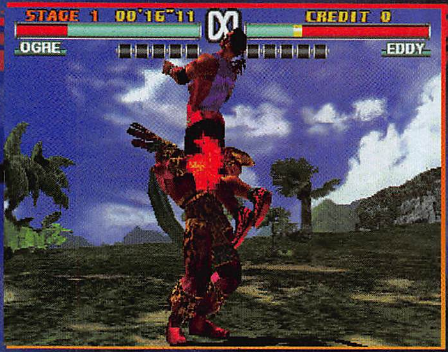




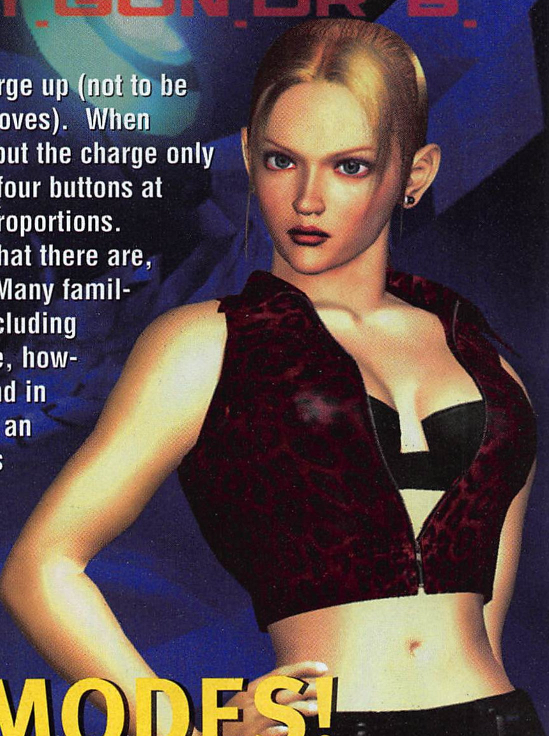












more damage.

Another addition is the ability to charge up (not to be confused with the unblockable Spirit Moves). When charged up, all hits do more damage, but the charge only lasts for a few moments. Pressing all four buttons at once will power you up to prodigious proportions.

Some will be disappointed to learn that there are, in fact, fewer characters in *Tekken 3*. Many familiar favorites are noticeably omitted, including Bruce, Baek and Wang. You will notice, however, that many of their moves are found in the new characters' repertoire. Bryan, an undead combatant, has most of Bruce's maneuvers; Hwoarang is an amalgam of Lee and Baek; and a few characters can execute many of Kazuya's favorite attacks.

TEKKEN 3 ALL NEW MODES!

ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE ASPECTS OF *TEKKEN 3* IS THE NUMBER OF MODES AVAILABLE FOR PLAY. THERE ARE A TOTAL OF NINE DIFFERENT MODES,THREE MORE THAN LAST YEAR'S VERSION. THE NEWEST INSTALLMENTS ARE BALL MODE, FORCE MODE, AND THEATER MODE.

•PRACTICE MODE•

This time around the practice menu has been given more depth, allowing you to customize a wider variety of situations. Your "dummy" has more options, from the standard, crouch and auto block positions, to adjustable cpu skills and counter options. Also, you can set it so that the dummy will light up every time he is hit, showing you where your contact points rate for any given combo.



•THEATER MODE•

Offering the least interaction is Theater Mode. All you can do here is view the endings of the characters which you have already beaten the game with. There are a total of twenty-two different endings to view. Also, you can access all of the game's musical tracks, from original scores to the arranged pieces. Some fans will be ecstatic to learn that you can also access all of the music and movies from the first two *Tekken* titles (assuming you still have the games). All you have to do is insert the *Tekken* or *Tekken 2* CD, into the PlayStation, in Disc mode.



•BALL MODE•



One of the more original modes to show up in a fighting game, Ball Mode engages you in a little game of volleyball. Bat the ball back and forth, but don't let it hit the ground too many times, or you'll take damage. Strike the ball with a powerful blow and you can charge it up, sending it flying back at your opponent. If he duffs it, he'll take serious damage. The same goes for you, though, so stay on your toes. In order to access this mode, you must have beaten the game with at least ten of the characters. Beat Ball Mode, and you unlock the secret character, Gon.

•FORCE MODE•

Force Mode will give you the most replayability of the new modes. Much like *Final Fight* or *Double Dragon*, Force Mode has you taking your character through a series of four levels, where he or she will have to battle hordes of generic baddies, with such names as Owl, Hawk, and Raven. Each level has you not only watching your health meter, but the time as well. When the clock reaches zero, *bing!* you're dead. You earn bonus time every time you eliminate an opponent. Food is also available (CHICKEN!), to replenish your life bar.

Each level has an end boss. The bosses vary, depending on which character you are playing (Paul will have to fight Kuma, at the end of stage two, for example) and defeating them rewards you with mucho extra time.

Each time you complete all four levels, you will receive a key. Earn three keys and then you get the chance to duke it out in the arena with Doctor Bosconovich. Beat him in combat, and— voila!— you earn him as a playable character.



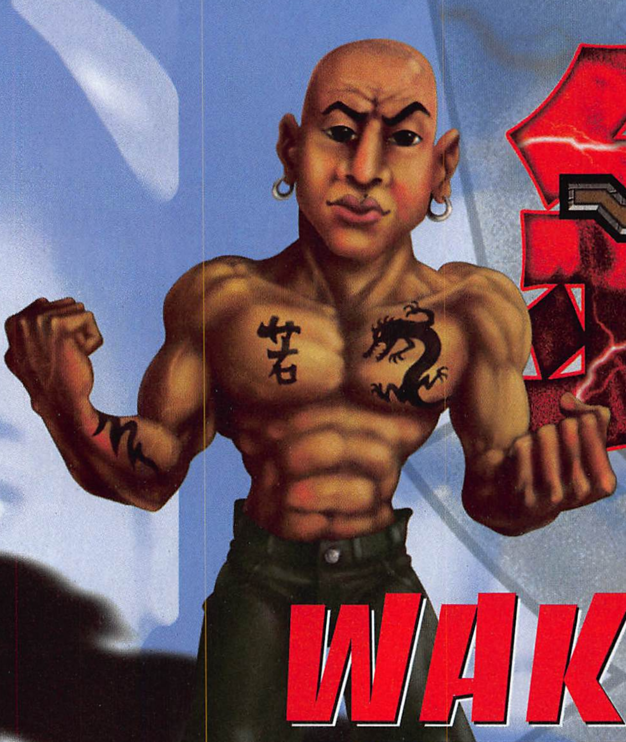
R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - NAMCO	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - NAMCO	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



EL NINO
Where's the competition GON?



TEKKEN 3

WAKA VIEWPOINT







GRAPHICS

Anyone can easily see that T3 is far better graphically than DoA. Texture mapped polygons over Gouraud shading baby! Not to mention CG that puts DoA to shame! And, CG endings for all 21 characters—thank you! Now, put the games side by side, and look! Look really close... Do you see the lovely frame rate in T3? I thought so. Turn on the sports-bra mode, please! Demeaning is what it is. (But I'm not complaining... he he.) Of course if I were to fight ECM in real life, he would get a can of ass-whuppin'! <Flexes>

CONTROL

Unlike DoA, T3 actually has more control and stability than your average fighting game. Button-mashing? I think not! Sure I admit that Eddy Gordo is cheesy (c'mon what fighting game doesn't have 1 cheesy character), but at least you won't have to be inputting a fireball motion every time you want a move to come out. T3 also has more physics when you're playing. In T3, fat and heavy characters are slower, but pack a punch. In DoA, everyone is skinny! Therefore there really is NO control.

MUSIC

Now in this category, Waka is right hands down! T3 has music that was done by NAMCO! Now where can you go wrong? They don't slap together synthesizer music on their CASIO-250X. They actually compose it! And as an added bonus (info-mercial cliché), they have an original and arranged score as well. Bucket?? More like putting the bucket over my head so I don't have to hear ECM's whining as I did King's "One-Double-Mexican-Combo" on him. Still not satisfied? Try poppin' in a T2 or T1 game CD. Three games in one! That, my friend, is more music than you can shake a stick at!

PLAY MECHANICS

I have a bone to pick with DoA. A reversal button? C'mon! WHAT IS THIS?! Do they really think that gamers are that dumb to not know how to input moves? One punch and kick button? Three with a "Hold"? T3 has all of the buttons laid out to use at your leisure. You wanna throw? Then simply press one punch and one kick. Simple. In DoA, you have to input a fireball command (and if you're lucky enough to accomplish that on a PS pad), and press punch and whatever. Who cares?! Since T3 has more moves (at least 90+ per character!!), you're not stuck with moves that you can see coming a mile away. Trust me on this one, folks. I played in a *Tekken 2* tournament (got worked), and know this, maaaan!

OVERALL

At least I can say that I have taste when it comes to games. Play 'em all and love 'em all (well maybe not ALL of them). And, at least I can play games, unlike ECM for that matter. Don't get me wrong folks, DoA is a game everyone can play, and I don't hate it, but it's just not better than Tekken 3. No way! There is just more depth in Tekken 3 than ECM knows. You definitely get more for your money too. Now if only ECM had bought Tekken 3, maybe he could have used that leftover money to buy some skill at playing games and a new baseball cap! *Wataaaaah!!*

VIEWPOINT

Control

When it comes to control, DOA has Tekken 3 beat... down. I mean, what would you rather have? Solid, precision control or the saliva-spewing button-slapping of Tekken. The simple fact of the matter is that the control in DOA wastes T3. Players move more quickly and are much more responsive than the zombies of Tekken. Speaking of zombies, players with molasses-like reflexes (such as Waka) can't appreciate the raw power of DOA's control—the brain isn't exactly quick enough to keep up with the timing required in a man's game.

Graphics

Let's see. On the one hand, you have the pretty close port of Tekken 3 to the PS console with most of the visuals intact—yippee. On the other you could have the completely redone power visuals of Dead or Alive. Everybody commends Namco for going the extra mile in their PS ports, but Tecmo went all the way by changing the basic look of DOA for the better. Gouraud-shaded polys straight out of the Tobal 2 handbook, and you'll notice none of the 'we have huge, globular hit sparks to cover up our lousy collision routines' from Tekken 3.

Music

Music?! Who on this God's earth plays fighting games for their musical content?! I'm not even going to go into this at all. If I want to listen to some music as I'm kicking Waka's skull in, I'll pop in a Ramones or KMFDM CD. Otherwise, I'm too involved in actually mastering the intricacies of Dead or Alive to notice it. As for Tekken 3's music, well, at least I have a bucket handy...

Play Mechanics

Play mechanics?! Yeah, I'm really into memorizing combos that require all the skill of your nearest toaster. I mean really, all you need to be succesful in Tekken 3 are two things: Hard-wiring 10-hit combos into your puny reptilian hindbrain, and if that fails,simply cheese people to death with the capoeira (dancing) antics of one Eddy Gordo. I could go the weak route and pick on the lame Tekken 3 modes such as 'Ball Mode' (volleyball for the mentally challenged), 'Force Mode' (Streets of Rage with all the fun stripped out), and other extra fluff, but why bother when you have the supremely playable DoA at your fingertips. Oh yeah, and lest Waka use Tekken's 3 Dual Shock support as a crutch, keep in mind that Dead or Alive supports Sony's joltin' pad—so no dice there Waka-san.

Overall

In all honesty, do I really need to say more? When it comes down to it, who you gonna trust anyway? Me, the most critical human to walk the earth since Senator Lieberman (heh, that's just a little joke between you and me), or Waka, the man that thinks Tokimeki Memorial is the greatest concept for a game since Battle Monsters ("6 pages?! Are you out of your mind?! Must have been all that hair clouding his vision." Feel the power of the mullet!!!) Anyhow, this game stomps all over Tekken 3, and if you can't see that, well, I hear they've started a brain cell donor program (Waka: "Not only am I the president, I'm also a client"). Oh yeah, and how-could I ever talk about DOA and not mention the bouncing! At least DOA's babes are beyond the training bra level...

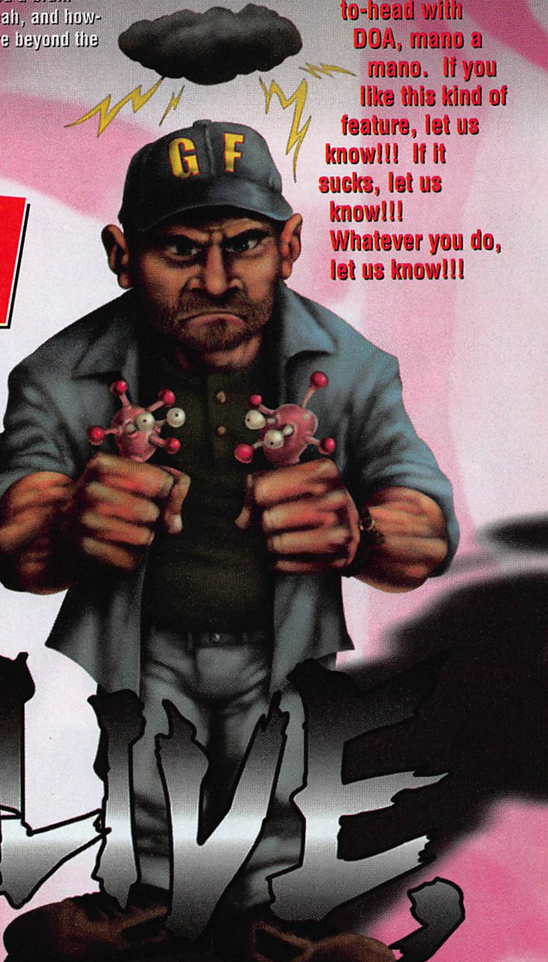
Seeing that Tekken 3 and DOA are both very similar fighters and that they are going to be competing in the same market (despite being separated by a month or so) we figured we'd do a little something different and have Tekken 3 go head-to-head with DOA, mano a mano. If you like this kind of feature, let us know!!! If it sucks, let us know!!! Whatever you do, let us know!!!



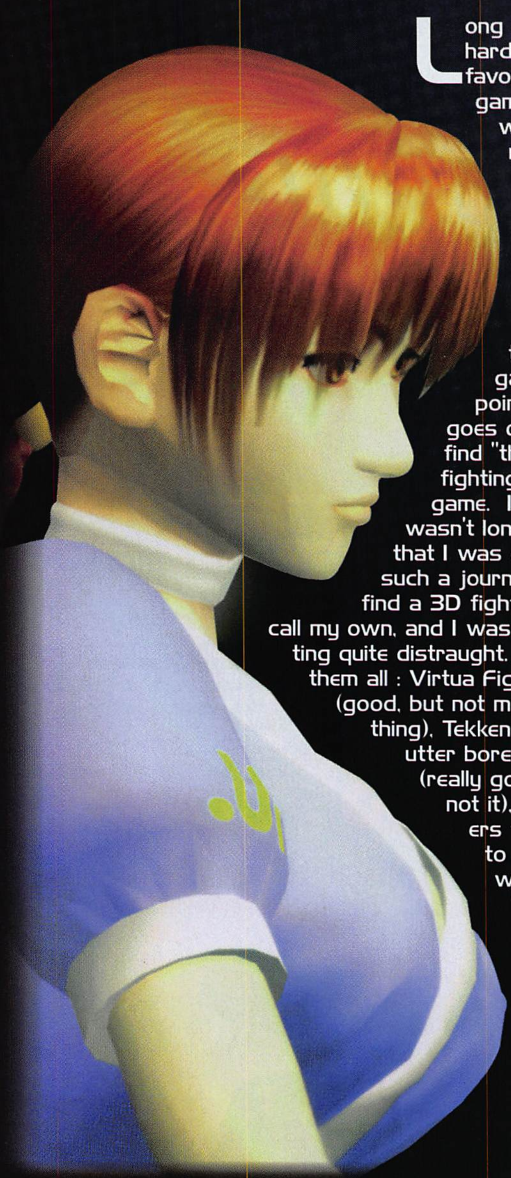
ECM







DEAD OR ALIVE

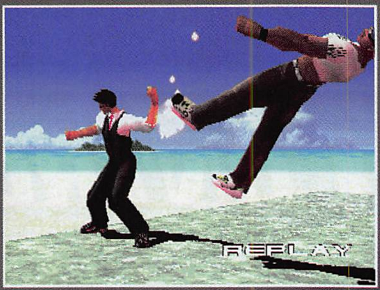


Long ago, it wasn't hard to pick your favorite fighting game, as there were only three, maybe four of them out there. Nowadays, with literally hundreds of fighting games in existence, every gamer at some point in their life goes on a search to find "their" fighting game. It wasn't long ago that I was on such a journey to find a 3D fighter to call my own, and I was getting quite distraught. I tried them all : Virtua Fighter (good, but not my thing), Tekken (an utter bore), Soul Edge (really good, but just not it), and many others too numerous to name. What was I to do? Then, like a gift from Belldandy (an anime reference - how sneaky!) herself, Dead or Alive descended into my life, and the rest is history. The characters! The moves! The bouncing... er... yeah.

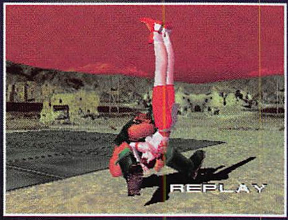
If you've never played DOA, let me give you the quick rundown. DOA was the first non-Sega game produced on Model 2 hardware, and resembled Virtua Fighter 2 in a number of ways. DOA plays very similar, and while it's not quite as deep, it's pretty darn close. The big difference here is that instead of the third button being guard, it's Hold.



When an opponent is attacking you, if you time it just right, you'll reverse your opponent's attack, giving you a quick chance to get an attack in at them. This adds quite a bit of strategy to the game, because no matter how good you are at pulling off the moves, you also have to be ready to react if that cool combo is suddenly stopped short. As well, instead of ring outs, DOA has a "Danger Zone" surrounding the ring. This zone is sort of a floor laced with explosives, and if you get knocked



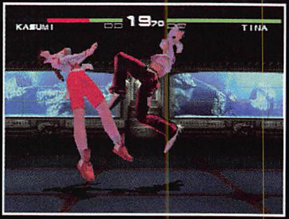








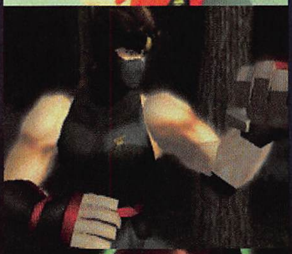


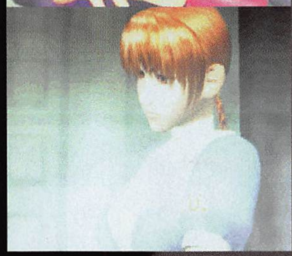




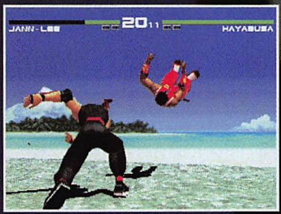
DEAD OR ALIVE



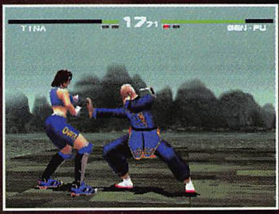



down onto it, they next thing you'll see is your body being blown up into the air by a huge explosion.
I may as well kick off my opinions of the game with a small rant: I'm really getting sick of the "It's nothing like the arcade version!" argument being used against the PSX version of DOA. ‹cough›... IT'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE! The Saturn version was the arcade port, the PlayStation version is the "new, original" interpretation of the game. Tecmo made no claims as to the PSX version being an arcade port—they knew they couldn't do one (at least one as good as the Saturn version), so instead they did the smart thing and remixed the game. And I know that I'm going to catch hell for this, since anyone who says one possibly negative thing about the Saturn OBVIOUSLY hated the system, but I think the PSX version is the better game. I loved the arcade version, I love the Saturn version, but the new "Tobal 2" look and feel that the PlayStation version has just works so much better. The characters look fabulous this way, and when you see Kasumi or Tina in their new bodies you'll wonder why they weren't done like this in the first place. Beyond the obvious change so far as the character go, the other differences in the game are 90% good, 10% bad. Two new characters are included, Bass Armstrong (‹yawn›—doesn't really fit in) and Ayame. And if you thought you had to play the Saturn version to death to get all of the costumes, good (?) news... Tecmo added even more this time around. Control is just as good as the Saturn version, possibly even better, as I find it easier to do moves while using my Dual Shock than ever before. Speaking of the Dual Shock controller, DOA is America's first fully DS compatible game, giving you shakes and









rumbles as you get hit by your opponent. PSX DOA also adds some nifty new explosions and hit detectors, which can all be turned off if they're not to your liking. The look and feel of the game also received a facelift, with menus and lifebars fitting the "DOA look" much better now. You've got a wonderful selection of modes to keep you busy for hours: Tournament, Time Attack, Danger Zone, VS, Survival, Kumite, Team Battle, and Training. And yes, that whole breast topic: They're still there, they bounce even more ‹groan›, and in some outfits, they are now actually separate body parts instead of one whole piece like on the Saturn. There, I talked about them, ARE YOU HAPPY NOW?!? ‹sob› So what's the bad news? The backgrounds. With the exception of the somewhat cool Arctic stage (which even produces visible breath from the fighters), the backgrounds are abysmal. I mean ABYSMAL. It's like Tecmo didn't even try to make them look good.

Temco should, however, be commended for their American translation of the game. They did what most game companies should do when bringing games over from Japan: They changed very little, even down to leaving the "secret" Omake folder on the disc and retaining that wonderful phrase "New Costume Get!" My only real complaint is the packaging, from the obviously-not-PSX-version screenshots on the back to the overbearing cover (with a very bizarre white haired Kasumi). Ah well... don't look a gift horse in the mouth, they say. Dead or Alive is a fabulous fighting game, brought to life even more in its new PSX incarnation. This is without a doubt my vote for best home 3D fighter (and not just for it's boingosity), and no PlayStation owner should be without it. Tekken finally has some serious competition on a system that it's had to itself for far too long now.



· BASS ARMSTRONG · PLAYSTATION EXCLUSIVE CHARACTER!

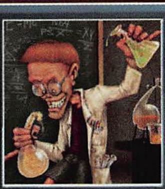




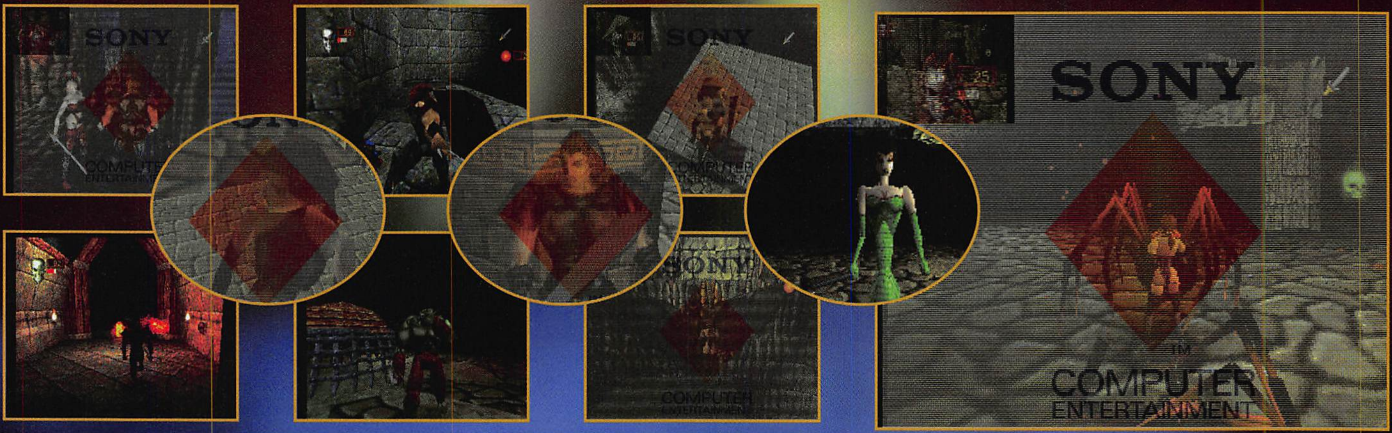


R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TECMO	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - TECMO	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



DX SHIDOSHI
Nice to see Ryu getting work after *Ninja Gaiden...*



DEATHTRAP Dungeon

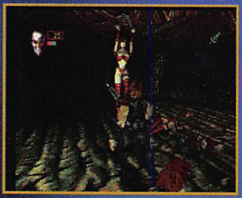
When you think of the name Eidos, images of Lara Croft and various other Core titles generally leap to mind. While I haven't been the biggest fan of Core's 32-bit titles thus far, I can say that most of them are good, solid games (if a bit overrated). However, from the moment I booted this dungeon romp up, well, let's just say I wasn't a happy warrior.

We did a number of updates on this title in past months, and every time we kept expecting most of the issues we had with it (and there were quite a few) would be at least bandaged up prior to the game's release. Well, uh, maybe this one should have spent another couple of months in intensive care, as nothing is going to save this one from the horror that that is the land of misfit games (i.e. the bargain bin).

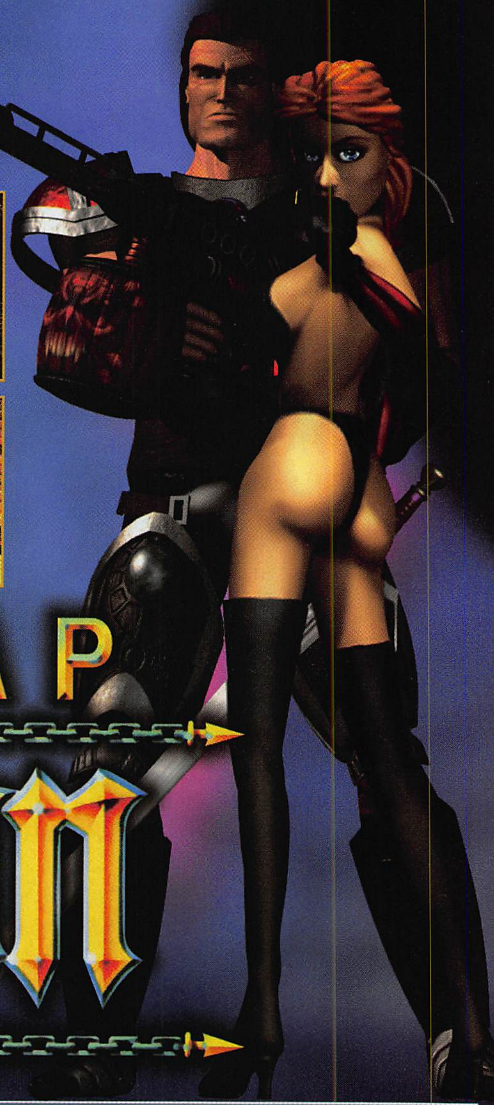
Essentially, *DD* had all the elements that could have made it a medieval *Tomb Raider*. Run around expansive levels, flipping switches, killing baddies and other hero-like activities in large, 3D environments. It certainly must have sounded good on paper, but the sub-par control (a lot like sticking your hands in a tub of molasses and manipulating the control pad) and shockingly dismal visuals drove a rather large, two-handed sword through this game.

I'm not one to condemn a game too much if it has less than stellar graphics, but when they're this framey and pixelly, well, it's hard not to be dismayed. Creeping along somewhere in the high teens to low twenties, this game shambles more than it animates. Low-res textures abound, and the aggravating camera control leaves much to be desired. I have to wonder why in the world Eidos didn't do their darndest to grab Core's *TR* engine for *DD*—it would have helped immensely.

As it stands, this game is a whole lot of pain waiting to happen. Unless you're really desperate for another 3D action/puzzler, stay far away. I can certainly think of something better to do with $40 of my hard-earned cash, like paying someone to inflict damage on my body instead of doing it myself. ***ECM***







R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EIDOS

PUBLISHER - EIDOS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MODERATE

AVAILABLE - NOW

ECM
Now that's an apt title...

BioF.R.E.A.K.S.







It's easy for a game reviewer to just sit back and knock a title, but sometimes you just want to scream, because a development team will collect a bunch of really innovative ideas and character designs and then slap them into a crummy engine and hope that we like it. There is nothing more precious, in this industry, than a good idea. When a company stumbles across such a commodity (and they rarely do) it is imperative that they nurture it. Unfortunately, *Bio-Freaks* falls prey to this unfortunate malady.



Soon to be available on the N64, as well, *Bio-Freaks* is another poor fighting title that shows us a glimpse of originality and innovation and then sets out to due them injustice by wasting them on a sub-par fighting engine.



The ideas that make this an intriguing game range from interactive arenas to introducing combat with lost limbs (shades of *Time Killers*), weapon firing, and flight. Likewise, the character designs are interesting, as well as the apocalyptic storyline, which resembles that of many nihilistic future games (with a dash of Clive Barker thrown in). It was obvious that the developers had the creative juices flowing, but it is just as clear that they had bitten off more than they could chew.



The problem which plagues *Bio-Freaks* is that the gameplay isn't exactly there. One could compare it to that of *Rise Of The Robots 2*. The characters seem stiff and have few moves at their disposal; I couldn't, for the life of me, get anyone to perform more than a half dozen punches and kicks. Also, the frame rate is too low, making it even more difficult to enjoy. Once again, I really like the idea of having to fight on after losing an arm (and boy, is it bloody) but garnish like that cannot save this game.



In addition, I am also quite disappointed by the music. It completely fails to establish any sort of atmospheric effect and does little to hide the apparent lack of cool battle sound effects.

A step above *War Gods*, *Bio-Freaks* is nonetheless still mediocre, at best. With the likes of *Bloody Roar*, *DOA*, and *Tekken 3* on the shelves, there is no reason, on God's green Earth, to buy this title. My recommendation is for Midway to stick with sports titles (and *Micro Machines*!). ***EN***



R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SAFFIRE	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NIÑO
Bio-Freaks? Biohazard's more like it...













MORTAL KOMBAT 4™

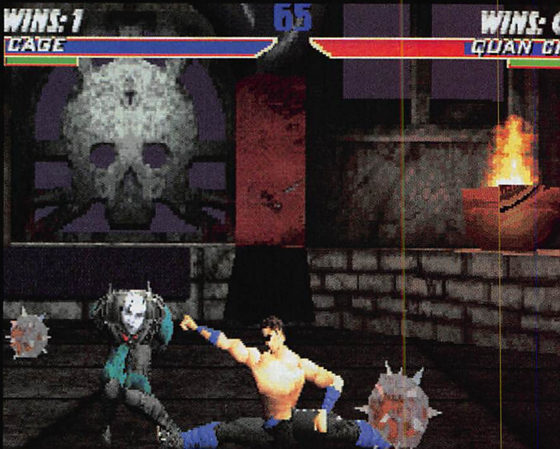
With its third coming getting tiresome and a movie sequel that pretty much sank deeper than the Titanic (the ship, not the movie), the whole *Mortal Kombat* theme seemed both played out and dead. Well, Midway had other ideas as *Mortal Kombat 4* burst back on the scene with back-to-basics gameplay, a fresh 3D look, and some minor gameplay additions that helped more than hurt. So it was the natural path for *Mortal Kombat 4* to be ported home and it was a natural selection (upon ECM's great wisdom) that yours truly give you the ins and outs of the PlayStation version of *Mortal Kombat 4*.



The thought of *Mortal Kombat* on the PlayStation brings up those dreaded loading time memories when *MK3* first appeared on the PlayStation (oooh... those Shang Tsung transformations... agh). So when I popped in our preview version of *MK4*, I was expecting tremendous slowdown, even for a beta-burned version. Lo and behold, with the exception of the loading times between fights, *Mortal Kombat 4* runs equally as smooth as the N64 version... meaning silky smooth. While no fatalities were available on this version, gameplay has the solid feel of the arcade, and elements from past *Mortal Kombat* versions. Yes, the run button is still there, and yes, the set combos are there, but so is that great arcade feel of *Mortal Kombat 2*. Notable changes for those that have been staying safely away from the *MK* horrors include weapons that can be drawn during battle. Each character has a different weapon, though they are basically used the same, with the exception of missile weapons (boomerangs and crossbows namely). These weapons can also be thrown at enemies causing a copious amount of bloodletting if unblocked. Also note that weapons can be knocked from your hands and into the eager grasp of the nearest foe, so don't be to hasty to draw out that big sword.



The fighting arenas are the typically dressed *Mortal Kombat* dungeons, though this time around, you can move in full











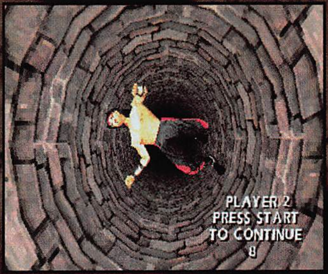





3D. Objects that lay about your feet aren't just for decoration either, as you can pick up random objects (ranging from spiked balls to human heads) and fling them at your opponents. Though this isn't enough to make it the talk of the town, they're minor features that don't hurt. With fifteen regular characters to choose from, the saying, "You can never have enough of a good thing" is well represented here. With old favorites like Raiden, Liu Kang, and Sonya, and new characters Reiko, Kai, and Fujin, there are more than enough fighters to fill the arenas to the rim with blood (not to mention any secret fighters Midway has hidden... and you know how many they usually hide... ;)). Gameplay is well balanced along with some boss characters looking to lend a hand in the bone-breaking; some even have four... Sound and music wise, it's a little early to draw any conclusions. Music chopped in and out and while sound effects held out a bit longer, they were muted. While this was kind of disappointing, I still got a kick from hearing guys say, "Oh, I'm going to throw you over there!" in under a second's breath. Quite a number of the game options weren't finished as well, and while options such as Tag Team (where you select two fighters to battle with) could be activated, I didn't relish playing Liu Kang when only his right leg appeared—must have been a rough fight...

Of course, rambling about such errors is moot since this game is far from being complete. And Midway has pretty much delivered the goods for any game they've worked hard on, so don't fret. If you're one of the faithful *MK*'ers out there looking for a magical port of *MK4* PlayStation, just wait a bit longer, as it's not a miracle anymore.

D

















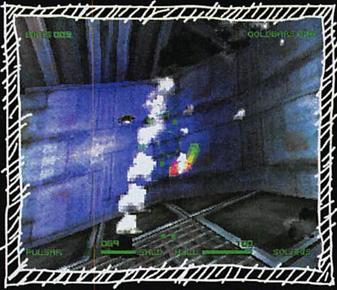
PREVIEW

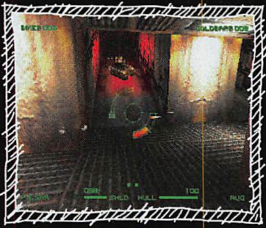
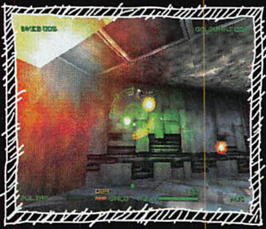
PlayStation

DEVELOPER - MIDWAY	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - MIDWAY	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - 3RD QUARTER



DANGOHEAD
I want FATALITIES!!! Where are the FATALITIES!?!!

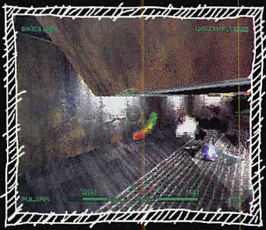



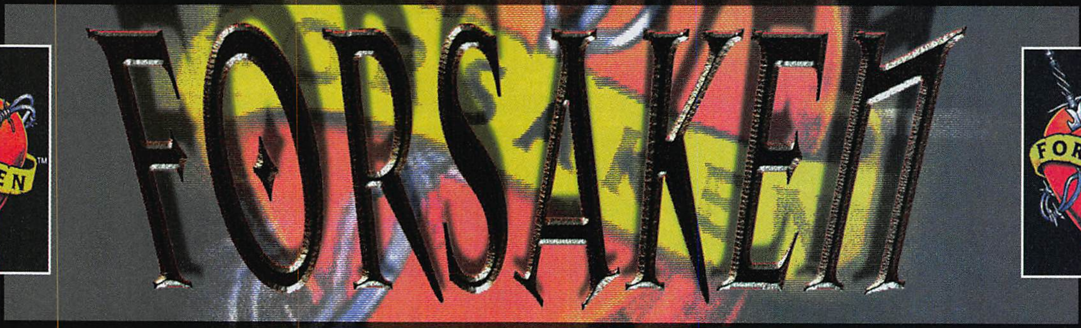




Things just seem to get better and better on the PlayStation. And Acclaim looks like they're going to blaze a fiery trail of hotter games for the system this year. On that note, I just got a look at Forsaken for the PlayStation (okay, more like playing it for several minutes before Eggo cried and pulled the plug) and if you like blazing, almost nauseating corridor-madness for your gaming delectation, you'd better buckle up and hold on tight.

Though you could almost call it a Descent rip-off, I would call it upping the ante. Featuring vehicles that range from hover-bikes to hover-behemoths, and weapons that leave really hot flame effects, this is one game to be on the lookout for. Blazing at a very healthy 30 frames per second with NO clipping, NO slowdown, and NO loss of graphic quality, this one made Eggo run to the nearest restroom after his 'weak sauce' stomach gave out.

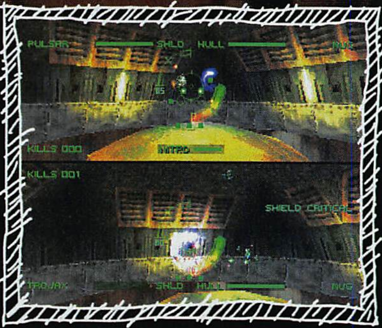
Gameplay is solid, though it may take some time for players to grow accustomed to using every single button in the heat of battle (yes, even the select button). Weapons are plentiful, ranging from machine-gun-like pulse



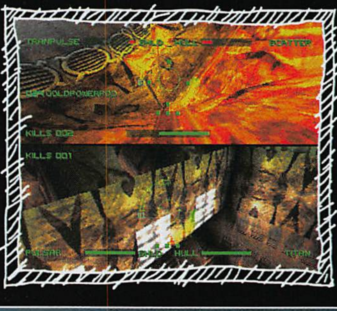
lasers, to robotic pods with nuclear warhead tips. There are also special weapon power-ups that boost damage strength, firing rate, and even give you invulnerability.

What I especially liked about this game—taking another cue from Descent—is the very good enemy AI. Enemies will dodge and weave between your shots, even hiding and attacking in packs. They'll also bumrush you and stay close, making it difficult to track a target. This makes the game so much more enjoyable and less of



the patterned drudgery found in most 3D corridor games.

Though only two players can duke it out in a deathmatch arena (unlike the N64's four), the lack of slowdown and blazing response time was all there as I proceeded to take advantage of Eggo's weak stomach and continued to pelt him with bright discs of death. With dramatic lighting effects on par with Quake GL on amphetamines, and techno-metal tunes blasting away, look for a rockin' review next issue. *D*



UPDATE

PlayStation

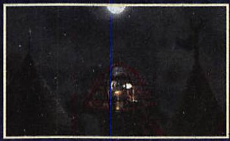
DEVELOPER - PROBE	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



DANGOHEAD
Not Eggo's cup of tea, but certainly mine.

DARK OMEN















This morning ECM handed me the rom for *Dark Omen* with a wink and nudge to Dangohead. Eh? What have I walked into? Eyeing the CD warily, I popped it in without a glance at the instructions despite Arcade Bob's warnings that I MUST read them before playing. Bah! Instructions! Hardcore gamers don't need instructions. Oh how wrong I was. After viewing an inspiring, though somewhat grainy CG intro, I was thrown in the midst of a real-time battle with no idea who the good guys were or how to issue an order.

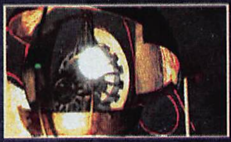
To make a long story short, let's just say that I was soon reaching for the instruction manual to this jagged little pill. I found it ironic that the first line of the instructions reads, "WARNING: READ BEFORE USING YOUR PLAYSTATION GAME CONSOLE." This is followed by the epileptic seizure/flashing light disclaimer, but I thought it more than appropriate in light of my current situation.

Dark Omen, published by EA and associated with Games Workshop, isn't being called a sequel to *Warhammer*, but it's made by the same people and runs on the same engine <cough> sequel <cough>. You play the role of Commander Morgan Bernhardt, leading your mercenary armies against a rising tide of undead armies and evil beasties. You control everything from issuing orders to individual units to deciding who will be on the battlefield, and unit placement. I had never played *Warhammer*, so didn't know what I was getting into.

After a crash course in the play mechanics (flipping through the instructions like a madman), I was soon winning campaigns, reinforcing depleted armies, buying new armor, etc. But it was not easy. Control is my biggest concern in *Dark Omen* considering you're in command of multiple groups on a large battlefield spanning many screen-lengths. And I, like most of you out there I'm sure, have never even seen a PlayStation mouse (one was last spotted in Nevada leaving a deserted casino). Thus, a player who has never played *Warhammer* before will be breaking nearby items while watching an impending army of darkness come marching towards his scattered forces (No!!!).

If you liked *Warhammer*, then you'll surely like *Dark Omen*. The intro and





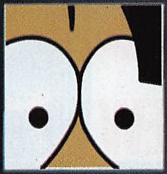
story are involving, as are special touches like the talking character portraits between fights. Speaking of portraits, during battle a unit's caricature will pop up in the bottom left to give you field reports. And as your units survive more and more battles, they will level up and gain experience. Eventually, you can hope to command a band of ragged veteran soldiers who will obviously fight better than an untrained army.

One of the best aspects of *Dark Omen* is the music, which is amazingly well-done, consisting of an inspirational, militaristic campaign march. However, due to the complex controls in the real-time environment, I'd recommend renting this one before buying it. And if real-time war sims don't do anything for you, stay far away.

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - GAMES WORKSHOP	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - EA	DIFFICULTY - AVERAGE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



EGGO
Swallow your pride and read those instructions.









Granstream Saga



I (as well as all of Team GameFan) am aware that most of our readers yearn to be in my position. Getting to play video games for a living is far from the coal-shoveling that my ancestors used to do. It does have one side-effect, though: burn-out. You get jaded doing this sort of thing, and it can leave you feeling listless if not totally aloof.

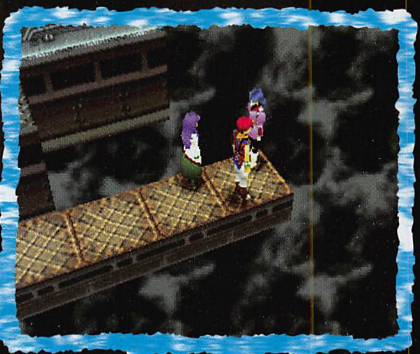


One genre that keeps you going is the RPG. If done well, an RPG can deliver the same impact and satisfaction of a good book. Like an interactive movie, the RPG stimulates. I need to be stimulated.



Oh, how the PlayStation needs more RPGs. I can't tell you how many times I have quizzed ECM and Shidoshi, asking them if they know of any good ones that I may have missed. Alas, the cupboard is bare.

A quick fix, for an acute ailment, *Granstream Saga* comes from the most unusual of places: THQ. One of two RPGs they will be releasing this quarter (the other being the stellar *Quest 64*, for the N64), *Granstream Saga* looks to be another butterfly stitch in the ongoing repair of the THQ reputation (thank all that is holy you never had to play *Time Killers*!). *GS* is an enjoyable adventure that boasts such facets as real-time battle sequences and a fully 3D engine.



The story features standard good vs. evil fare complete with a cast of unlikely heroes out to stop a greater evil. We'll delve deeper into the story at review time, but know that it's a solid, if a little cliched adventure.



The engine is impressive, with all of its polygonal characters and fluid movement. When you enter an altercation, you switch to a one-on-one bout, in which you have total freedom of movement, and are not hindered by turn-based combat. Maneuver around your opponent and swipe at him with your sword, or raise your shield to fend off blows. The amount of animation is limited (all his feet do are shuffle around), but this pro-active fighting system keeps the game exciting.



Also of note are all of the animated sequences. The action, in *Granstream*, is tied together with some beefy anime shorts which add much needed flavor. And in fact they are done in the style of the old *Y's* games by Falcom, of which the creators of this game are former members.



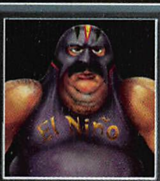
Granstream Saga has already been out in Japan for some time, and performed fairly well. From this gamer's point of view, it definitely has potential—stay tuned. EN

P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - THQ
PUBLISHER - THQ
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - JUNE '98



EL NINO
A quick fix for an acute ailment.





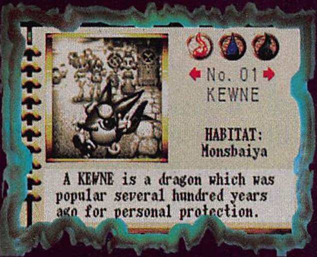












Another Konami RPG! After enjoying countless hours playing *Suikoden* and *Vandal Hearts*, I was left yearning for more. Here to satiate my cravings is the promising new title, *Azure Dreams*.

What looks to be one of the freshest RPGs to hit the home console, *Azure Dreams* can best be described as a fusion of *Suikoden*, *Zelda* and *Monster Rancher*. You play a monster tamer whose dream is to follow in your fallen father's footsteps. A menacing tower looms over your homeland and it is there, in a quest to reach the pinnacle, that your father died. You are now fifteen and have come of age. You too can enter Monster Tower. You too can become a great tamer, like your father.

Already I can tell you that there are some great features in *Azure Dreams*. First off, this game cannot be taken lightly, like all other RPGs. As you ascend the levels of the tower, you erase all that is before. To die means that the game is over and you cannot reset the machine, because the saved game won't be there. How's that for incentive to stay alive?

Also, you can find a huge number of interesting items to help you on your quest. From weapons and armor to potions and scrolls, all of the traditional













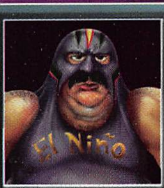
RPG goodies (along with some unique to AD) are there for the taking. Most important of these items are monster eggs. Find eggs to bring back to town. There you can sell them or hatch them. A hatched monster can be trained to fight for you, and there are numerous species to pick and choose from.

Since the game revolves around a single tower, you'd think that the level would get repetitious. Not so. Monster Tower is magical and every time you enter, the level composition changes, constantly keeping you on your toes. What may have hidden around said corner one time, will lay, in wait, somewhere else. Hell, the whole level may not even be there! How does that whet your appetite?

P PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - KONAMI	DIFFICULTY - HARD
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - JUNE



EL NINO
A cross between Suikoden, Zelda and Monster Rancher.





"...runs over Twisted Metal like so much roadkill..."

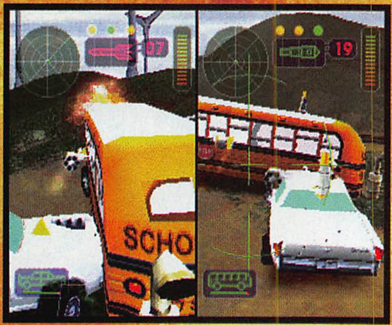
VIGILANTE 8

Activision's current work in progress, *Vigilante 8*, takes the PlayStation classic *Twisted Metal* and runs it over like so much roadkill. The latest version of the game we have still needs fine tuning in terms of control, vibrating, and overall stability (ugh, the game crashes frequently). But, these are fine points which you will be fixed by the time the final version rolls around. And what a finished product it promises to be...

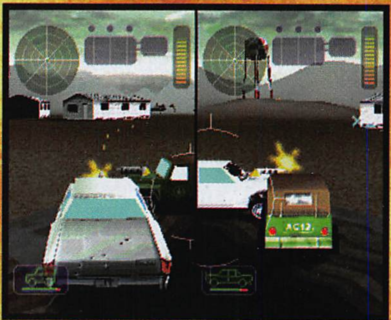
Moving at a really smooth 30 frames per second (*Twisted Metal* doesn't come close), no driving game looks this good and lets you shoot people at the same time. The frame rate not only helps the overall look of the game, but is also easier on the eyes as you scan the terrain for license plates to retire.

No driving/shooting game would be complete without a multi-player mode, letting you share the carnage with your friends. *V8*'s multi-player mode lets two players choose from versus (shoot a pal) or cooperative (shoot a pal and tell him you were aiming at an enemy) games in a split screen frenzy which can include up to 12 other cars, so the press release says. Even better, there's no noticeable slowdown in the split screen mode, and the frame rate stays very close to 30 fps at all times. What?! I get to hunt down my friend and shoot him like a pig at a solid 30 fps? Oh yeah!

At present, there are definitely issues with draw-in and shaky polygons, especially in two-player mode,

"...hunt down my friend and shoot him like a pig? Oh, yeah!"


U UPDATE

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - LUXOFLUX
PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - 2ND QTR.



EGGO
I wish I had a V8!



but these are expected to be fixed by the release date. In single player arcade or quest mode, these problems are a lot less apparent.

And don't worry about lack of variety in V8. There's 12 beautifully texture-mapped vehicles, 12 different weapons to go with them, 10 different backdrops to serve as the stage for your theater of war, and a bunch of weapon-specific special moves. Unlike *Twisted Metal 2* in which you could perform your special move any time your bar was full, in *V8* you can only do certain special moves when you have the corresponding weapon to go with it. A special move such as "afterburner" will ignite one of your missiles without detaching the missile—so your car is given a sudden burst of speed from a lit rocket strapped to the side of it. Each weapon has special moves to go with it, and they rock!

Oh yeah, did I mention that weapons and powerups are physically attached to your car when you run over them? Say you pick up a swiveling mortar cannon... it will be seen as an attachment on your car as you drive around. Every time you fire, the blast comes out of the cannon, not the front of the car. And lastly, when you use up the last of the ammunition, your non-standard issue mortar cannon will fall off the car while you're driving. You can tell just by looking at a car how many special weapons the driver of the car has. After a little collecting, your "non-stock" car will be a mobile mass of cannons, side-mounted rocket launchers, and other nasty appendages.

My space is running out, but I have to throw in this last tidbit—the game is Dual Shock compatible and it shakes. *V8* is programmed for analog control, a great asset when you're tight turning and driving in reverse amidst a chaotic rain of explosions. And every time one of those explosions finds its mark, your Dual Shock controller will vibrate. Gotta love it!

We'll keep you posted as the final version of *V8* becomes more of a reality. So far, the lighting effects and graphics of *V8* project it as a sure candidate for a *GF* hyperbolastic assault come review time. Stay tuned! ***E***

















"...a sure candidate for a
GF hyperbolastic
assault come review time..."






Ninja

"Now I have a sword. Ho Ho Ho..."





Eidos, creators of *Tomb Raider 2*, *Fighting Force*, and *Deathtrap Dungeon*, have in development another action/beat-'em-up with an Asian theme. Welcome to *Ninja*, a very arcadey-feeling, isometric action game. Our version is still far from complete, but the overall feeling of the game is there: "A very simple, pick-up-and-play adventure."

There's no need for an instruction manual, because the gameplay mechanics are all self-explanatory, true to an arcade game. You're a ninja, use your hands, feet, sword (when you find one), throwing stars, and magic to shred a slew of oncoming club-wielding goons, territorial giant crabs, and pissed off geisha. There are no tedious menus to wade through or time bars to worry about. All the action is real-time and constant, much like *Fighting Force*.

Throughout your journey, you'll find treasure chests (some of which are booby-trapped) which house helpful items such as weapons ("Now I have a sword. Ho Ho Ho..."), health (chicken—the resident gaming term for the aforementioned health), and gold, to tip the score in your favor. You will also encounter tripwires, swinging blades, and treacherous falls, which all have the potential to lessen the area's ninja count by one in a hurry.

Just in case you get tired of slashing skulls in an eternal hunt for chicken and the next checkpoint, the game shifts focus every once in a while and requires you to show off your platforming jumping skills <cough> ECM <cough>. There's plenty of jumps to be made; onto moving platforms, no less. And other obstacles like rolling logs make the task that much more difficult (Ed's Note: <cough>, Eggo, <hack>).

No ninja game would be complete without a bunch of classic ninja tricks such as using a smoke bombs and casting ninja magic. All those tricks are here, and limited in number of casting. Keep an eye out for this fun, arcade-feeling game, slated to hit shelves later this year.






E






PREVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CORE

PUBLISHER - EIDOS

FORMAT - CD

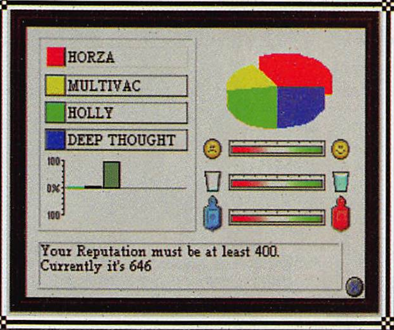
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MODERATE

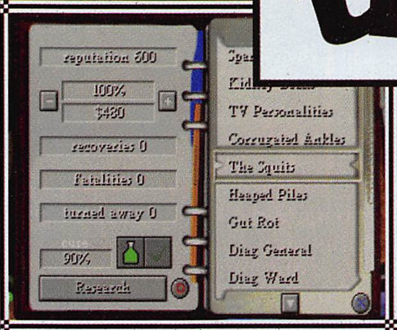
AVAILABLE - 3RD QUARTER



EGGO
Look... a quarter cruncher!











Imagine: a game in which you help people instead of turn them into blood sausage. The developers at Bullfrog have, once again, come through with an enjoyable, off-beat gaming experience that will suck you in and leave you wondering where the day went.

If you remember how much fun it was to play Theme Park (the 3DO version had me engrossed for months—"More salt on those fries, must drive up soft drink sales!"), then you'll be ecstatic to get your hands on Theme Hospital. The St. Elsewhere of sim titles, Theme Hospital has you running everything from the researching of new medical breakthroughs, to making sure that the handyman waters the plants. Hire nurses, doctors, and shrinks to diagnose your patients and make sure that the floors are spotless; too much trash equals rat infestation!



theme HOSPITAL

Just like Theme Park, you are given a budget, and an empty building. Place benches, receptionists and beds—every nuance affecting the happiness rating of your patients and VIPs that will periodically show up for inspection. The game is divided up into sections, each with a goal to advance you to the next level. The criteria to succeed is based on the number of patients you cure (don't kill anyone!), the amount of revenue you generate (it's not about the money, right?), and how much capital you accrue. Fulfill the requirements and you will get offered a beefier position at a bigger hospital. Fail, and it's Minister of Health... in Uganda.



To those of you that are not familiar with Theme Park, this may sound too convoluted. Fear not. Theme Hospital is easy to learn and the interface keeps the game from bogging down. Believe me, when you start playing, you will be hungry for more. Better bone up on that malpractice insurance. *EN*



R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - BULLFROG
PUBLISHER - EA
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NINO
Marcus Welby got nothin' on me!









THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD

The Saturn has traveled a long, hard road here in the U.S. Filled with some good times (**Virtua Fighter 2, Virtual On**) and bad times (I won't even go there), the Saturn has entered the twilight of its years (all three of 'em), and if the good times outweighed the bad times, even in the smallest increments, it would be easier to forgive **House of the Dead**. Alas, as I grab a box of flowery tissues, I cannot begin to express the deep emptiness and heavy melancholy that comes over me as I realize that this is the way the Saturn will go out; not with a bang, but with a flag that says "Pop!"









Developed by the same technicians of the very nice port of **Manx TT Superbike**, Tantalus has missed the target on this poor translation. I guess I should start nice before I toss this baby to the neighbor's dog (whiizzz, splat... Go fetch, Fido). The gameplay is all there, though that's not saying much. Playing the game with the Stunner and hitting enemies is no problem at all, though sometimes when you think you've accidentally grazed an innocent bystander (okay, I WAS aiming for them!), you don't hit them at all. Well, whatever works in the favor of the player, I guess. It's quite easy to play with the control pad as well, and personally, I think it's a bit advantageous as reloading takes less than a nanosecond. Also, the other playing modes are pretty cool as you can play different characters with different abilities in Saturn Mode, or practice on the different bosses in, what else, Boss Mode. Much like the arcade, there are different paths to take depending on how well you do. While this adds variety to the usual monotony, it's far from coming close to redeeming this game.







Sure the game plays well...but I'm not playing **House of the Dead** for solid playability. I didn't go to an arcade, pop in the change, and say to myself, "Hey, this gun handles pretty well." I'm playing for the cool visuals, period. And let me tell you, bad doesn't begin to describe the sorry state of the graphics. And using the excuse, "Well it's going to lose graphic quality cuz it's on the Saturn"—please, don't give me that load of horse manure. We're talking about pixelly polygons the size of my thumbnails, shaky camera movement, and flickering enemy entrails. Believe me, I love the Saturn (almost as much as ECM), but if a game is going to look this ugly next to its arcade sibling, don't do it.

It's really ironic that the titles to the four chapters in this game summarize the Saturn's last days: It's a "Tragedy" that the Saturn is dying, but as much as SEGA tries to exact "Revenge" upon its competitors, the "Truth" is that the Saturn's days are over and it belongs only in one place... "The House of the Dead." *D*

R REVIEW

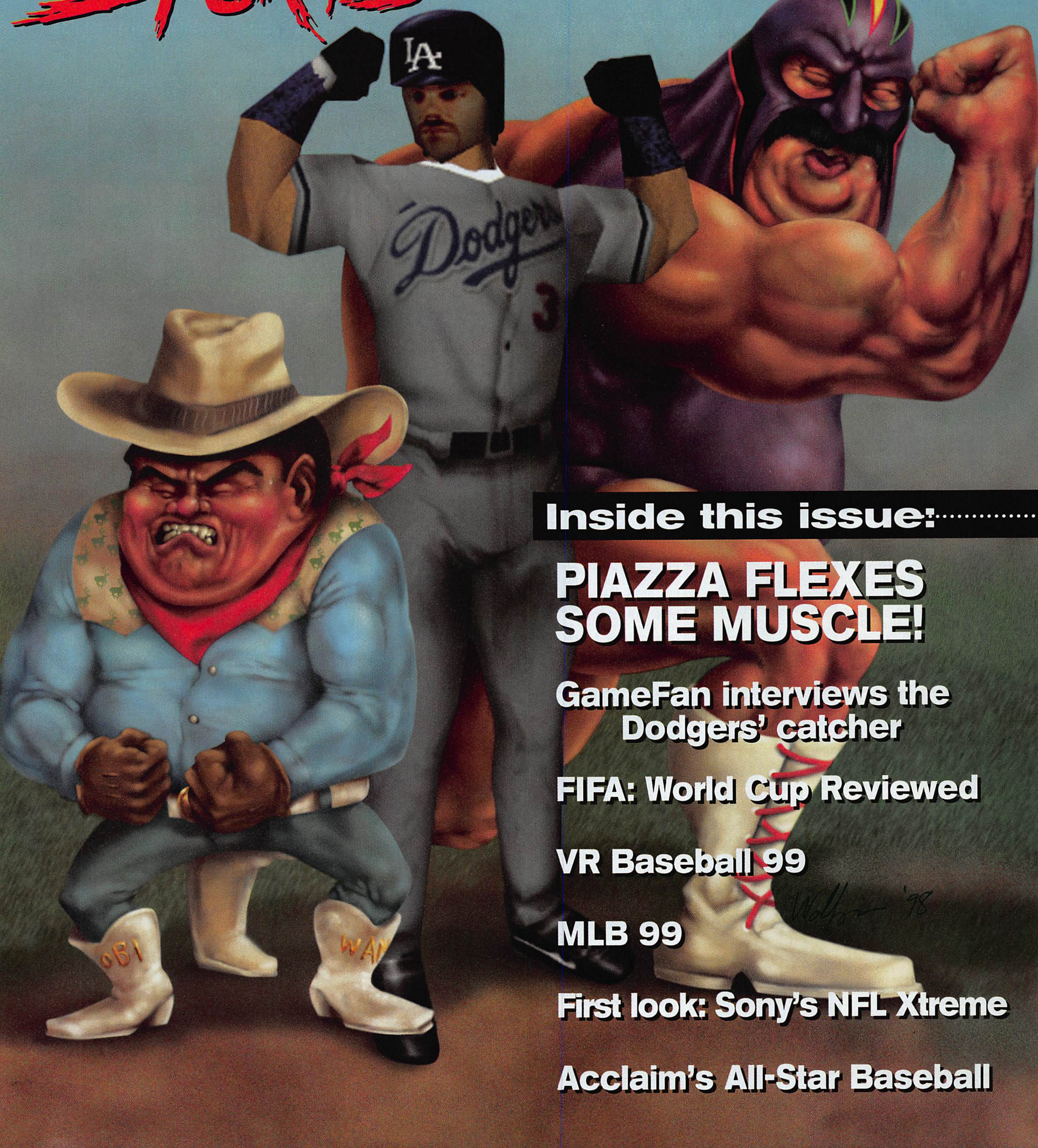
SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - TANTALUS	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - SEGA	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



DANGOHEAD
(As "Taps" begins to play) May the Saturn rest in peace...

GAMEFAN SPORTS



Inside this issue:

PIAZZA FLEXES SOME MUSCLE!

GameFan interviews the Dodgers' catcher

FIFA: World Cup Reviewed

VR Baseball 99

MLB 99

First look: Sony's NFL Xtreme

Acclaim's All-Star Baseball

GSN
gamefan sports network

Baseball season is finally here and well underway; man did winter seem like it lasted forever. There are a full slate of baseball games coming out this year, although two regulars, *Grand Slam* and *Bottom of the 9th*, haven't shown up at Spring Training yet.

Triple Play 99 hasn't really floated my boat; nice intro, but very little was changed or fixed from last year's game and, as a result, hasn't really gotten me all that excited. One game that I cannot wait to play is *All Star Baseball '99*, from Acclaim; now *that* game looks awesome. Have any of you have seen that EA Sports *Triple Play* commercial, on ESPN? The one where they have a rendered Alex Rodriguez at a press conference getting kissed on the cheek by a woman? Well the graphics are okay in *Triple Play*, but in *All Star Baseball '99* they are awesome. But to be fair, Acclaim's game *is* on the Nintendo 64 and *Triple Play 99* is on the PlayStation. The rule has been so far that sports games on the Nintendo 64 look better and sports games on the PlayStation play better and until I play something that changes my mind, that's my story and I'm sticking to it [Editor's note: we accept no responsibility for Video Cowboy's ripping off Colin Quin's Weekend Update tag line].

VIEWPOINTS

viewpoints



Most people didn't give the first *VR Baseball* much of a chance... their loss. *VR Baseball '99* ain't pretty, but it has the best AI around and that is what will keep die-hard baseball fans playing. If only it had better graphics and some better commentary, this would be a major crowd pleaser.

G 6 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 8 — **89**



VR Baseball '99
PlayStation
VR Sports



I was a huge fan of *VR Baseball*. This time around the folks at VR Sports have improved the ball physics and worked on the player models. Graphically this game isn't as cool looking as some of the other games, but they managed to improve on the frame rate and the stadiums look good.

G 6 C 8 P 8 M 6 O 8 — **88**



I have stated that this game edges out *Triple Play 99* for the year's best PlayStation baseball sim. This aside, *MLB '99* will annoy some with careless AI and incorrect rosters (come on guys, Saberhagen is on the Red Sox and one of their best pitchers).

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 — **91**



MLB '99
PlayStation
SCEA



I'm going to have to be a little tougher on this game than El Niño. The fact is that while *MLB '99* looks and plays great, the AI is too carelessly done for my liking. You can throw a guy out at first... from right field. They call that realism?

G 8 C 7 P 7 M 7 O 7 — **87**



On the comeback trail. *FIFA: World Cup* will please the AYSO members across America. I can't say whether or not it will be able to hold up against the upcoming *International Superstar Soccer*, but I am content to know that, for now, my soccer needs can be met.

G 9 C 8 P 8 M 8 O 8 — **89**



FIFA: World Cup 98
Nintendo 64
EA Sports



Easily the most visually stunning soccer title I have seen to date, but the game falls a little short in the control department, which is ironically outdone by the PSX version. Shot control and player animation are leagues ahead tho', so it keeps this one from slipping too much. A good buy for N64 soccer fans that need a fix.

G 10 C 7 P 8 M 8 O 7 — **88**



Not quite the beauty that can be found running on the N64, *World Cup* on PlayStation will still impress. Great graphics, sound and playability make this the best *FIFA* title since the 3DO version. Oh, how I remember the days... Someone must stop that Tub Thumping song though.

G 8 C 8 P 8 M 7 O 8 — **88**



FIFA: World Cup 98
PlayStation
SCEA



That's what I'm talking about. EA Sports is finally back in the house with a ball-bustin' version of *FIFA* soccer after a long dry spell dating all the way back to *FIFA '96* on the PSX. Great animation, control, AI, sound, music (please tell me the final has redbook audio)... the works, baby! The best *FIFA* yet!

G 8 C 9 P 8 M 9 O 7 — **91**

Another game that may prove everyone wrong is *Mike Piazza's StrikeZone*, from GT Interactive and Devil's Thumb Entertainment. That game might just shock some people. Devil's Thumb were the developers who made the Super Nintendo versions of *Ken Griffey Baseball* and *Ken Griffey Presents Major League Baseball*, two great games for the 16-bit machine. Those games were the two baseball games, besides *World Series '97* and *World Series '98* for the Saturn, that have recaptured the fun factor that was present in only one other game in interactive sports gaming history. That game was *Baseball Stars*. No big names; no fancy licenses... just a great playing baseball game; it's still one of my all time favorites.

In this edition of *GameFan Sports*, we not only sat down with the developers to chat a little about their philosophies on baseball and how it was working with Piazza, but we also got a chance to chat with the future Hall of Fame catcher himself. He's also an avid gamer, along with his brother Tommy...

FIRING STRIKES: MAKING OF MIKE PIAZZA'S STRIKEZONE

Devil's Thumb Entertainment has been around gaming for a while. They made the hit series of *Ken Griffey Jr.* titles for the Super Nintendo. *Ken Griffey Baseball* was the first game that came the closest to playing like everyone's favorite, *Baseball Stars*.

If they can recapture that feeling with *Mike Piazza's StrikeZone* for the Nintendo 64, they will be in good shape. More often than not, you can also tell how into a sport the team is by how many fans they have working on the title. Do they play baseball? Watch the game?

In this day and age the gaming world is full of baseball titles, and you don't usually find that the people who work on them would sooner go to the ballet than watch the Yankees play the Orioles. The people making these sports games live and breathe the sport and are diehard fans. That is the case with Devil's Thumb and we had a chance to rap with Brian Ullrich, a huge baseball fan who also happens to be the Vice President of Development at Devil's Thumb Entertainment.

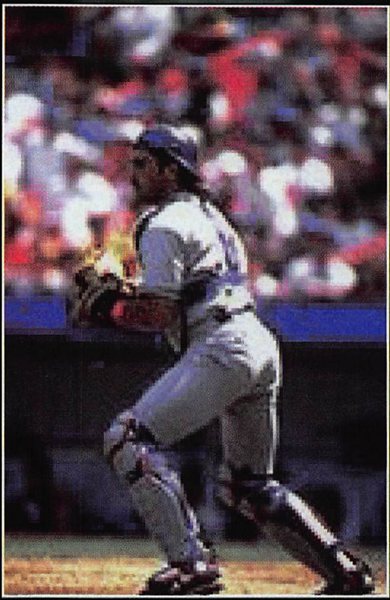
GF: What involvement, if any, did Piazza have in the making of the game?
BU: Mike Piazza was signed late in the development cycle of *StrikeZone*... so, unfortunately the game was pretty far along before he got involved. We hope to get a lot more feedback and direction from Mike for the sequel.

GF: Did he have any input in the design of the game?
BU: He did offer some advice on some of the subtle nuances of the game.

GF: Did you use motion captured players to emulate the player animation? How did you accomplish that and was Piazza involved?
BU: The players in *Mike Piazza's StrikeZone* are not motion captured. The animation was created by an animator using Alias/Wavefront. I feel that motion capture is way overrated. Basically motion capture is a way for developers without a lot of animation expertise to get realistic (sort of) player animation. However, we found that a great animator can accentuate human motion and make it more exciting than it would normally be [with motion capture]. In my experience, even when you motion capture, you still need an animator to take the data and manipulate and shape it to get something cool.

GF: How big of baseball fans are you?
BU: Pretty big, I think. I usually spend my vacation on road trips to

Mike Piazza
mike piazza



different ball parks. I have been to all but three of the current MLB parks and probably over 15 minor league ones on these trips. I once drove 20 hours straight to see the last game at the old Comiskey Park in Chicago, and I once made a girlfriend name her new puppy Santo [after Cub great, Ron Santo].



INTERVIEW viewpoints

WITH MIKE PIAZZA

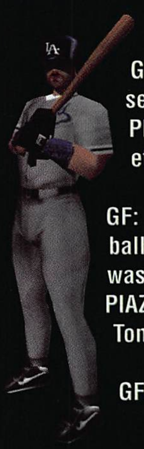
GF: What is your favorite part about being a major league player?
PIAZZA: The competition.

GF: How do you measure your success as a major league player?
PIAZZA: By how fulfilled you are.

GF: As a budding major leaguer, who were some of the players you looked up to and wanted to be like?
PIAZZA: Mike Schmidt.

GF: When you were younger, what did you think you wanted to do as a career?
PIAZZA: Pro baseball player or a drummer in a heavy metal band.

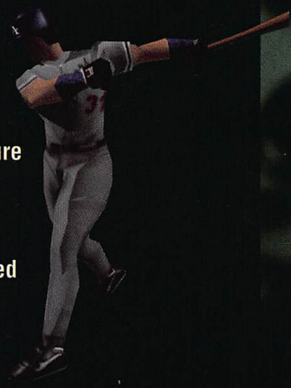
GF: Do you think baseball fans' "Strike Hangover" is now over and is the game as healthy as it once was?
PIAZZA: Yes, I think it's recovered.



GF: Which up and coming player reminds you of yourself when you were breaking into the league?
PIAZZA: Jason Kendall, because he has a great work ethic and gives 150% each day.

GF: How instrumental was Tommy Lasorda in your baseball career and would you be in the major leagues if it wasn't for Lasorda?
PIAZZA: I absolutely would be in the major leagues, but Tommy definitely inspired and motivated me.

GF: How disappointed were you when Tommy Lasorda retired?
PIAZZA: I was sad, but Tommy's health was more important to me.



GF: What ties did Lasorda have to your family and did you feel any added pressure because of that affiliation to become an all-star catcher?
PIAZZA: Tommy is the Godfather to my brother. However, I did not feel any added pressure.

GF: What do you feel is your most shining moment as a major league player and why?
PIAZZA: [My] first Big League game in Wrigley, because my dream of making it to the majors had finally been achieved.

GF: Who are some of the toughest hitters in the league to get out?
PIAZZA: Tony Gwynn, Larry Walker, and Jeff Bagwell.

GF: How good a hitter is Tony Gwynn?
PIAZZA: Gwynn is an excellent pure contact hitter.

GF: Who is the toughest pitcher you have ever caught?
PIAZZA: Ramon Martinez, because his ball moves so fast.

GF: To save your knees and prolong your career, do you think that you will ever move to first base or go to the American League to play as a DH?
PIAZZA: No, my knees are fine and I would like to catch as long as I can.

GF: Is language a barrier with some of your pitchers and how do you break down those barriers?
PIAZZA: I've learned quite a bit of Spanish since playing winterball in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, and I am currently learning Japanese and Korean.

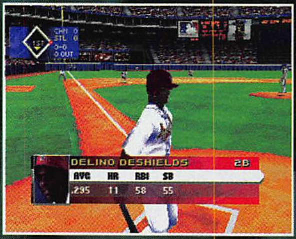
GF: How many more years do you think that you will play and what do you think you want to do after your baseball career is complete?
PIAZZA: I would like to play for as long as possible and then go into broadcasting/acting.



GF: Do you play video or PC games? Which are some your favorites?
PIAZZA: *Air Warrior 3*. I try to beat my brother Tommy, but I haven't been able to yet.

GF: Do any of your teammates play games in the clubhouse or on the road?
PIAZZA: Yes, mostly on the road, because of down time in hotel rooms.

VR BASEBALL



VR BASEBALL

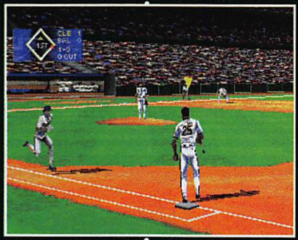


Last year's version did not get its just recognition. People were too quick to pounce on the game for its sub-par graphics, never giving the game a chance to wow 'em with its AI; the best AI of any PlayStation baseball sim.

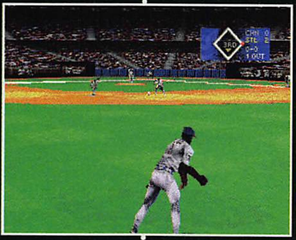
I loved *VR Baseball*. True, it didn't hold my interest as long as *MLB '98* or *Triple Play 98*, but that was due to the fact that it took too long to complete a game. The developers have remedied this problem for the sequel, as well as addressed all of the other faults that the first installment suffered from.

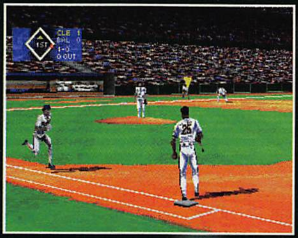
What were the problems with *VR Baseball '98*? The biggest was, of course, the graphics. The field was rudimentary, the players were nondescript and the frame rate was pretty low. This time around, much improvement was made. The detail of the players is much better, as is the look of the playing field. The colors are more vibrant and the stadiums look more like their real-life counterparts.

Another problem was the aforementioned time issue. Games would last forty minutes and you'd go crazy waiting through the tedious process of batters walking to the plate. Taken care of; all of the unnecessary motion has been eliminated.









The last area that *VR Baseball '98* was lacking in was the sound. Well, to be honest, *'99*'s sound isn't much better. No play-by-play leaves it in *TP* and *MLB*'s dust, but the game sounds are just fine.

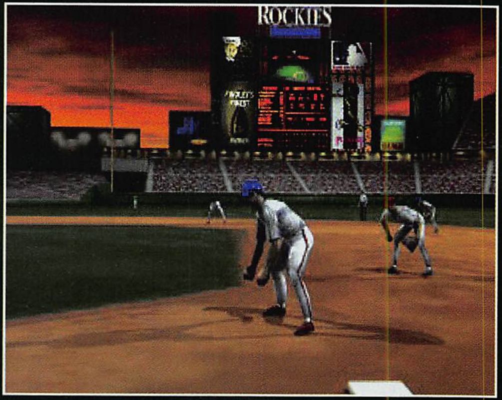
The AI in *VR baseball '99* is stellar. Baserunners play heads-up ball, stopping halfway on fly balls and taking extra bases on throws to the wrong base. The ever important manager AI is sharp. Pitchers get the hook when they're supposed to and, at the harder difficulties, the manager will put the heat on you, running aggressively and pitching tough.

All of the plays, from run-downs to DP balls, have the players executing correctly. You'll even find some nice relays and plate collisions, to add to the realism.

The interface is the same as last year, with the pitching grid being broken down into 81 zones and the batter using nine zones. On-the-fly menus are available and stat breakdowns are easy to read.

VR Baseball '99 is a great baseball sim. I can't rate it as high as *TP* or *MLB* because of their exemplary feats in graphics and sound, but if AI is what drives you, *VR Baseball '99* still has the most realistic sim for the PlayStation. ***EN***





R REVIEW

PlayStation

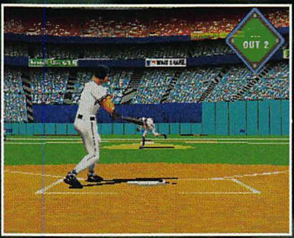
DEVELOPER - INTERPLAY	# OF PLAYERS - 2
PUBLISHER - VR SPORTS	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW

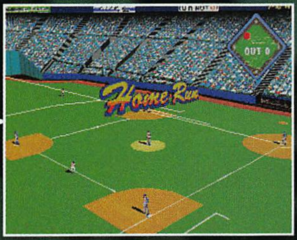


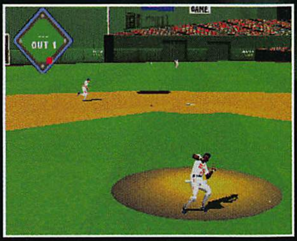
EL NIÑO
Amazing what one year of beauty sleep will do.

MLB 99









Who's it gonna be this year: *MLB* or *Triple Play*? Every season I must ask the same question, because while there are a couple other solid baseball sims on the PlayStation, these two are the clear frontrunners. Last year, the race was a bit too close, and I rewarded both with equal ratings. *TP98* had the sweet AI and juicy commentary, while *MLB* stole the look and played better.

This year, the clear winner is *MLB'99*. True, *TP99*'s dual commentary is superior, and the AI a bit more realistic, but the overall product just can't compare. Let's look at what makes *MLB'99* the best the PlayStation has to offer.

Looks: *MLB'99* is, by far, the prettiest girl in the pageant. A whopping 12,000 frames of animation and a comprehensive library of motion captures spring to life with the assistance of impressive, 30 fps speed. Add in all of the little moves like crow-hopping, bare-handed grabs, home plate collisions and over 200 batting stances, and you have a pretty damn good facsimile of the real thing.

Sound: Purely farm league, when compared to *TP*'s brilliant sound and commentary, *MLB'99* nonetheless fills your ears with most of the sounds that call a ballpark their home. The play-by-play is well-paced and the calls usually resemble what the actual play is ("pop-fly to shallow center" still accompanies line drives, on occasion). Raises the game excitement to another level.

Stats: It's all there. While the tracking is as beefy as ever, developers also spent time working on presentation, making the statistics read much easier than in last year's version. Also, this year there are user stats, something that you don't usually see in baseball sims. All that's missing is franchise tracking, but you've gotta have something for the big *MLB 2000* game.

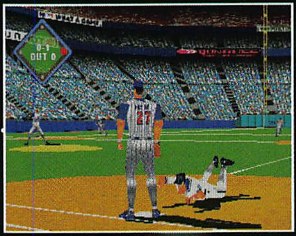
Artificial Intelligence: It's getting harder and harder to differentiate the quality of baseball AI, from one game to another. All you can really do is count the number of times you get pissed off because of a dumb maneuver by the computer. What keeps *MLB* one step behind *TP*, in this department, is the sub-par baserunning AI and the tendency for pitchers to show up too frequently in the starting rotation (Hersheiser twice in two days? Come on...). Also, pitchers tend to throw to base too many times; even when it is clearly not a steal situation. This adds to game time. Lastly, the AI hasn't learned to recognize a lost cause. Instead of going for the sure out, computer players will always attempt to get the lead runner, often ending in everyone being safe. This wouldn't happen in the real thing, so it shouldn't happen here. This particular problem plagues all baseball sims, though.

Spring Training: As far as modes are concerned, I'll call this revolutionary: You can now create a player and have him battle for a roster spot in Spring Training. Also, you must keep him playing at a high level, during the season, or it's back to the minors. Now all we need is a franchise mode...

Although you can't lose with *VR Baseball* or *Triple Play*, *MLB'99* is the king, this season. If you love baseball (...and don't own a N64; man, is *All-Star Baseball* god-like) then MLB is a must have. ***EN***









R REVIEW

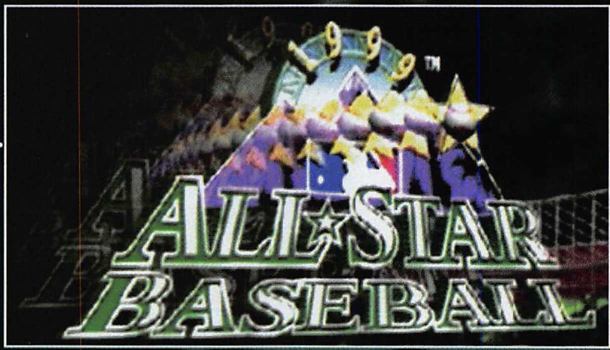
PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SONY SPORTS
PUBLISHER - SONY
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - VARIABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW

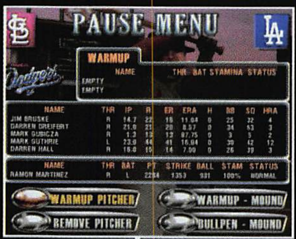


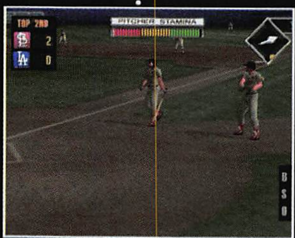
EL NIÑO
The King of Diamonds.

All Star 99

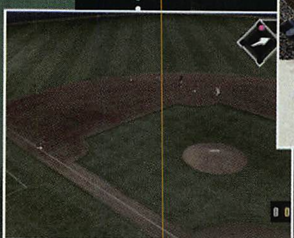











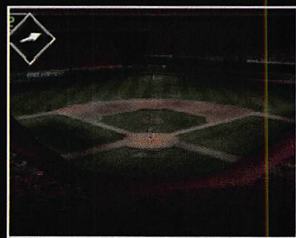
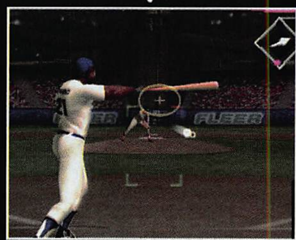
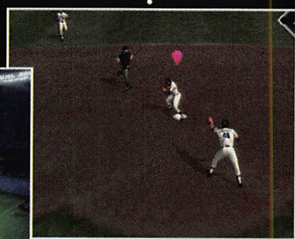


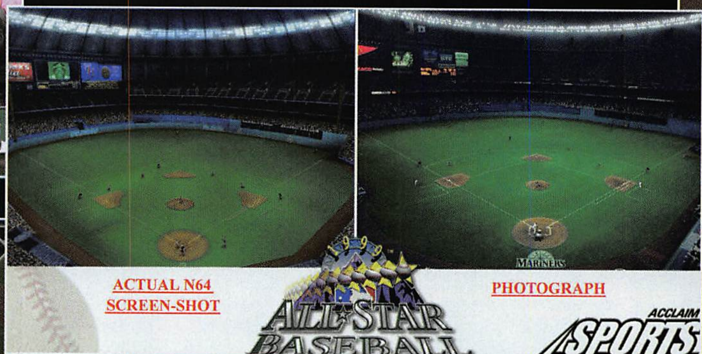
Last year, Iguana had their U.K. division develop *All-Star Baseball* for Acclaim. While it managed to be an enjoyable title, it just didn't measure up to the competition. This year, the developing is going on down in Texas, Iguana's hometown. The result? The best looking baseball title, ever.

I didn't get to play it much, so the verdict is still out on AI. But, the graphics and gameplay will floor you. Some of the other *GameFan* guys, who hate sports, even said they'd buy it. Even Nintendo's own *Griffey* can't hold a candle to this year's *All-Star Baseball*.

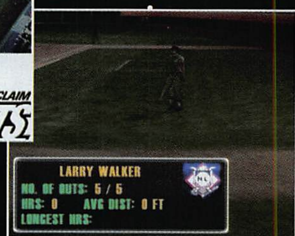
While this game is gorgeous and even manages some pretty good sound (for an N64 title), there's nothing new in the way of modes or features. You've got your standard exhibition and season play, homerun derby, and mock draft. There are about forty individual batting stances, loads of stats, and wind plays a factor.

Few innovations? Who cares? Not only does *All-Star Baseball '99* have all of the necessary components, it looks like a Boneccelli. If review time comes and I find out that the AI sucks, I'm putting my head in an oven... ***EN***



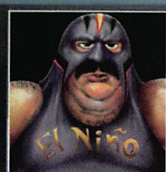
Can you tell which is live and which is Memorex? All-Star Baseball has the most realistic parks of any baseball sim.



PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - IGUANA	# OF PLAYERS 1-4
PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - NOW

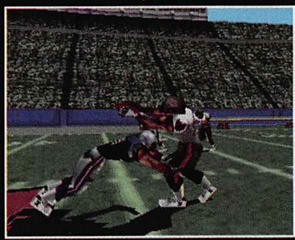


El Nino: All-Star Baseball blows the door off the competition!

NFL Extreme

NFL EXTREME



The quarter crunchers have *NFL Blitz*; soon, PlayStation owners will have *NFL Xtreme*. For those of you who are not familiar with this type of 'sports' (term used very loosely) game, think *Open Ice* or *NBA Jam* running headlong into *NFL GameDay*.

Xtreme is a five-on-five contest, where everyone is an eligible receiver—much like a flag football contest. What profits from this the most are the in-game graphics. Each player has a much higher polygon count (a whopping 400!) and frame rate (30 frames per second). Also, many more motion-captured moves were added to facilitate the over-the-top action. A visual bonanza this game definitely is!

The rules are this: You have four downs to go twenty yards. Use everyone at your disposal to march the ball down the field. There are no penalties (except delay of game) so don't look to the refs for help. The players are all bigger, badder, and meaner than their real-life counterparts, so watch out. Defensive players will hit you so hard, they can actually decapitate you!

This is not a gentleman's sport. *Xtreme* players will taunt each other, trash-talk, and perform over fifty endzone celebrations, in your face. You thought Deion was a showboat? Watch these guys do flips, dunk on the goal posts, and shimmy, Givens-style. Is there an Icky Shuffle? I sure hope so.

NFL Xtreme, while an arcade game, still has all of the necessary NFL elements. There are both licenses, full offensive and defensive playbooks, and player trading. The four basic play modes are included as well as three overtime options: College, NFL, and Tie Breaker. You will be allowed to customize your own team, hold a draft, and track player stats. User records round out the list of beefy options, and that is just about all I have to say at this point.

Basically, *NFL Xtreme* looks as though it is going to kick some serious butt. ***EN***

Bass Masters

BASS MASTERS





You all laugh, but damn, these games are addictive. Anyone who ever played *Super Black Bass* on the SNES knows what I'm talking about. Not only are they addictive,they sell... well.

So yes, I was excited to hear that another bass fishing game was coming out. Truth of the matter is that all of the PlayStation fishing titles currently available suck; plain and simple. We need one that could capture our attention, and it looks as though THQ may have the answer.

Bass Master Classic: Special Edition, developed by Inland Productions, will land in a lake near you come June. Backed by some major (in fishing terms) licenses, including the Bass Angler Sportsman Society (B.A.S.S.), fishing pro Roland Martin, and The Nashville Network, *BMC* will attempt to fuse the realism of bass fishing and the fun of video gaming together.

Four actual U.S. lakes, painstakingly recreated, will be available for the fisherman-inclined. There are thousands of lure combinations, name brand products and fishing tips to help you on your quest to land "The Big One." *BMC* will be a fully 3D experience and the popular "lure cam" will be implemented for the best in fish-catching action.

I am predicting that this could be one of the big sleeper sports hits of the season. ***EN***





Soccer Soccer Soccer

FIFA WORLD CUP 98

WORLD CUP 98
NINTENDO 64







I still cling to the belief that *FIFA Soccer*, on the 3DO, is the best soccer sim available. Maybe it's just the overwhelming sense of nostalgia, but I will not burst that bubble; God forbid I go back and play it again only to find out it bites. I saw *The Last Dragon* again, recently, and managed to ruin my fond memories of that movie (thankfully, the same was not true of *Ice Pirates* and *Teen Wolf*; those movies still rule).

The rest of the *FIFA* franchise has left me with mixed feelings, though. With the exception of the Genesis version of *FIFA 96*, most have been sub-par; especially when compared to the competition from Konami's *ISS* and Sega's *WWS*.

This last year has been confusing for EA soccer fans. Three soccer sims have been reported on with the FIFA logo attached, and even I had trouble separating them. First, there was the standard *FIFA* installment for the PSX and N64. Neither version was very impressive. Then, shortly thereafter, came *FIFA: Road To the World Cup*. Better, but not great. Now, there's *FIFA: World Cup*. Not only is the latter the best of the three, it will hopefully signal an end to the steady stream of EA soccer sims (we still want to see the annual installment, just not the quarterly).

Konami's latest *ISS* won't be showing up for a couple of months and you can forget any Sega soccer (or any other, for that matter) titles, until Katana. With the commencement of the World Cup, the lone soccer sim, of any importance, is *FIFA: World Cup*. This lack of choice shouldn't be of concern, though, because this *FIFA* is a very fun football game.

First you'll notice the graphics. Simply beautiful in the way only the N64 can deliver. Lushly colored with some nice looking stadiums and players, *FIFA* will be one of the best looking titles going. Also, the motion capture is stellar. With the help of U.S. player, Roy Lassiter, the on-field moves are as realistic as any seen on the console.

To complement the looks are some solid sounds. EA Canada has one of the best sound studios in the business, and they do their absolute best to combat the restrictiveness of the N64's poor sound quality. What I usually categorize as the least important aspect of any title actually carries some weight here.

Through the best of times and worst of times one thing has remained a constant: EA titles have the BEST artificial intelligence. *FIFA: World Cup* is no exception. The high standard, set in the days of the 16-bit and maintained through the 32 and 64 bit machines, is still intact. Offensive players always seem to be in the right place, at the right time; defenses adjust to developing plays; and goalies do as goalies do, getting in the way of everything humanly possible. I am the first to admit that my grasp of soccer's finer points is weak, at best, but player movement, nonetheless, makes sense to me. I have yet to have reason to gripe during gameplay.

Oh yeah, gameplay. This gameplay is fantastic. I will compare it to the purity of *NHL 94* or 3DO *FIFA*. From the moment you pick up the N64 controller, you're at home on the field. Control is tight and responsive, which is even more impressive considering the amount of motion capture and high frame rate that are implemented.

Really quick, let me rattle off some of the features. Many are nothing new and some aren't really all that exciting, but they add depth where depth is needed: country-specific crowds; 5 play modes, including Classic mode, only available to those that win the Cup; on-the-fly management; a handicapping system; Cup trivia; opening and closing ceremonies; play-by-play commentary; and new offsides AI logic for smarter play.

FIFA: World Cup is a great game that helps restore faith is the choking EA soccer franchise. A worthy purchase. **EN**






R REVIEW

NINTENDO 64

DEVELOPER - EA CANADA	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - EA	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT -CARTRIDGE	AVAILABLE - MAY



EL NIÑO
Re-establishing my faith in the franchise...

FIFA WORLD CUP 98

WORLD CUP 98





Playstation

playstation



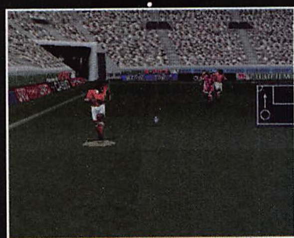


I feel that I need to address an issue, which is undoubtedly bothering some of you as much as it is me. That awful Tub Thumping song, by Chumba Wumba. About the only place you won't hear this song is in an Iraqi weapons depot. I think Pavarotti is actually toying with the idea of doing a cover of this cancerous tune, for the next Three Tenors concert. Who, at EA, thought that we needed to hear this song again?

That aside, it's time to talk about the new *FIFA*. That wacky french rooster, Footix, heads up a procession of the greatest soccer teams in the world, all vying for a seeding in the greatest tournament on the planet: the World Cup. I said it in the N64 review, I've said it in a ton of other reviews and I'll say it here: For awhile, EA Sports' soccer sims had been lackluster. Not any longer. With the release of *FIFA: World Cup*, the franchise, once again, rises to the upper echelon of soccer titles.

It should come as little surprise that the PlayStation version is slightly inferior to its N64 counterpart. While the same moves are exhibited, the frame rate is lower and the movements, less fluid. Likewise, the PlayStation version doesn't play as smoothly and is bogged down by some lengthy load times.





These issues didn't stop me from having a good time, though. The gameplay is still right up there, and the commentary (supplied by the likes of John Watson, Chris Waddle and Gary Lineker) remains the best in the genre. The AI is identical to that of the N64 version, and if you read that review, you also know of all of the new features, from game engine, to "off-side" logic, that enhance the title.

When making comparisons (and comparisons you must make) *FIFA: World Cup* still doesn't reach the level of greatness of *International Superstar Soccer*, but far outshines the last few *FIFA* titles. A good supplement to the World Cup experience. ***EN***









R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - EA SPORTS
PUBLISHER - EA
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-8
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW



EL NIÑO
What kind of name is Footix?

Welcome to PC GameFan

Over the years you may have noticed that GameFan has focused squarely on the console aspect of the video gaming business. The main reason being that we (meaning myself and previous editors at GF) never thought that PC games ever really possessed the same level of excitement and graphic sophistication that their console peers did. We looked at games like *Wolfenstein 3D*, *Doom*, *Quake*, *Command & Conquer* and *Warcraft* (among many others) as games that simply weren't complex enough, graphically, that it was really worth plunking down about $2,000 just to have a piece of hardware that would play admittedly great games, but that would be obsolete within a year (that may be a slight exaggeration—but only slight). And, for the most part, they'd be done at least as well on a console. However, two things recently and irrevocably changed that equation: The introduction of less expensive computers and the advent of some kickin' 3D acceleration hardware. Seeing as how for the fist time (in our jaded eyes, at least) computers are at least on a level playing field with our beloved consoles we've deemed them 'worthy' enough to feature them within our hallowed pages. Finally, games are playable enough and graphically appealing enough that it's worth the price of admission to get into the PC arena, instead of looking at it as a rather expensive alternative to console gameplay. So what can you expect from GameFan's foray into PC gaming? Well, we really want to leave that up to you, the reader. We started this section up not really sure as to what the hard-core PC game player would want out of it. We can promise you honest reviews and timely coverage, but that's something that we hope you've come to expect by now. Beyond that, what do you want to see from this part of the magazine? Lots of news? Just reviews and previews? Interviews with industry figures? Any and all of the above are fair game, along with whatever else you can come up with—it is, after all, your magazine. To get things started, though, we dove into the PC side of things face first and scored some hot prospects for the very first PC GameFan. We have the first really in-depth look at Digital Extreme's *Unreal*, the highly anticipated "*Quake* killer" being published by the folks over at GT Interactive. Following that, we have a look at a game that's aiming to take *Ultima Online* down a notch or three, with Sony's *D&D*-esque (that's *Dungeons and Dragons* for the uninitiated) *EverQuest*. Next up is Dreamworks Interactive's *Trespasser*, the 'sequel' to the *Lost World* feature film, and a very strong up-and-coming title. To wrap things up, we have another highly anticipated corridor game in Valve's *Half-Life*, published by Sierra—think *Quake* with more than just the reptilian hindbrain being employed to play it. That wraps up our first official look at PC games, but this section is here to stay. So send your suggestions through snail mail or e-mail at suggestions@gamefan.com and we promise to read every one. Beyond that, get set for a new website dedicated to covering PC games in a few months as we get ready to launch an online companion to PC GameFan. Watch for details at www.gamefan.com and expect some big things for next issue (as if this wasn't big enough!). ***ECM***

Welcome to PC GameFan

PC



THE UNREAL CHRONICLES THE COWBOY'S GREAT CANADIAN ADVENTURE

By Todd Mowatt

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, quite an out of the way place for what could turn out to be one of the best 3D corridor games ever made for the PC. At least Digital Extremes, Epic MegaGames, and GT Interactive are hoping that *Unreal* will be the "Corridor Game for the next Millennium."

GameFan's editor-at-large, the Video Cowboy, visited the Digital Extreme offices and saw the collection of movies and games that was strewn around their common area. You could tell just by the state of the room—empty soda cans upright not strewn around, an empty pizza box and odiferous smell of what could be Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza mixed, or someone who was wearing too much cologne after a long night of coding and had no time to run home for a shower and gussy up before we media types invaded.

In any event, it was evident that some serious all-nighter action had been taking place for quite sometime. Any budding detective or investigative journalist-in-training would have had to be blind to not notice that they had been watching *Batman Returns*, *Jurassic Park* and various versions of *Star Trek* during their mental health breaks.

They also had *Hexen* and *Turok* for the N64 on hand as well as a copy of *Extreme Pinball* for the PC, Digital Extreme's very first PC game. During our visit we were treated to what the Video Cowboy feels could be the *Quake*-killer: RIP *Quake* (II)—it's really that good.

We were given a look at some of the most stunning 3D worlds ever created and a chance to see the highly touted level editor in action. When asked about whether or not gamers or the gaming press would read too much into the fact that *Unreal* was late—not just late but really late, as the game was expected out early last year—Jason Schreiber, senior producer with GT Interactive, had some profound words. "A good game is only late until it ships, a bad game is bad forever. We wanted to take our time with this game. We know we have something special and we didn't want to rush things."

It didn't take us long to get to the programmer/designers' room, and it was time to get our first peek at the game. It was here that Cliff Bleszinski, lead level designer of *Unreal*, gave us our first look at the game itself.

UNREAL ROCKS-THE GRAPHICS ARE STUNNING

"A good game is only late until it ships, a bad game is bad forever. We wanted to take our time with this game. We know we have something special and we didn't want to rush things."

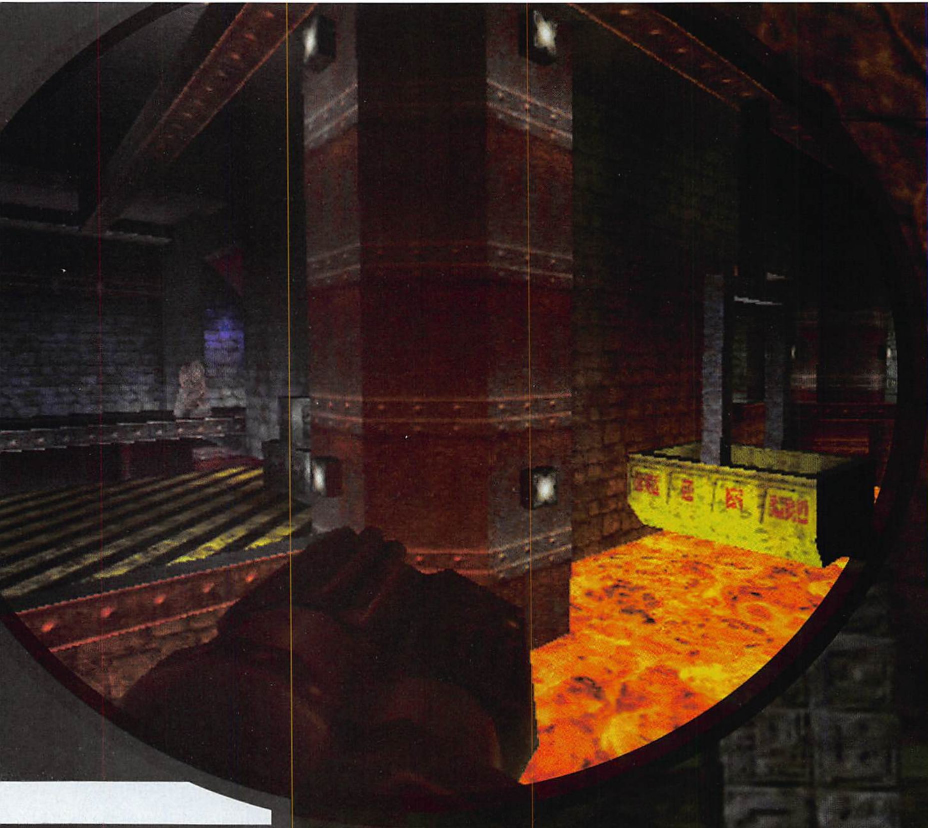
Gamers that enjoy graphically appealing games will be astounded by the detail in this game. For those of you who are sporting a Voodoo 2 or some other 3D accelerator card, wait until you boot up *Unreal*. The game is gorgeous and has very detailed, spacious 3D worlds. When asked what 3D accelerator cards *Unreal* will support, Jason Schreiber piped in, "If it's cool, it will be supported. And if it's not cool, it won't be."

Probably the most stunning effects are the ARTs, as they are called at Digital Extremes: Animating Real Time Textures. For the uninitiated, a texture is the coloring on the surface of a 3D object. Thus, you have wall-to-wall textures, floor textures, etc. You've seen this in many PC games. What you haven't seen is a texture animated like an ART. *Unreal* uses them for water, lava, and the crystal element found on the planet (no shortage of animation in *Unreal*—even the items are animated). It creates a shimmering effect that makes water look stunningly real. Almost so real you want to cup your hands and take a drink. A virtual oasis if you will. Picture your average *Myst*-clone. Those games always have beautifully animated streams of water. That's what you'll see in *Unreal*. The difference is that it's not part of a static background, or a cut scene. It's there in front of you, happening. You can walk around it if you like. The first time we saw the animated water, I thought for certain it was just a flat texture. But Cliff Bleszinski dove his character into the water, and was attacked by a school of fish. You could see their teeth and as they came closer, you could see the textures as if they were real fish, not aborted polygons that looked out of place.

Equally impressive were the lighting effects. Almost all of *Unreal* has been lit by design, as if it were a stage play and had a lighting director and lighting crew positioning each light to add to the scene. That is what the *Unreal* crew has done and the care that has been taken to deliver the ultimate gaming experience shows.

The lighting is incredible and the strategically placed lamps look and behave as if they were real. Look directly into one, and the lighting becomes fuzzy, get too close, and it starts to wash out your view. There's no shortage of colored lighting, but lighting is used to do more than engulf an otherwise routine piece of corridor. During one battle with a Skaarj, the lights were shut off completely, except for one flickering behind the Skaarj. So when the creature attacked, its front appeared almost completely black, except for a slight fringe around the edges. The polygonal models are incredible as well. The engine stretches polygons around the mesh (the wire-frame that makes the characters a 3D object) to eliminate the hard edges normally associated with 3D characters. We were shown one of the possible player-characters, a woman, and according to Bleszinki, "Our goal with this character is to give her the nicest, curviest ass in 3D gaming. Her ass will look much better than Lara Croft's—guaranteed," he said with a

"A good game is only late until it ships, a bad game is bad forever. We wanted to take our time with this game. We know we have something special and we didn't want to rush things."



Unreal

huge evil grin and a look on his face that indicated he hadn't seen his girlfriend in months. To help keep that smoothness, *Unreal* keeps frames in memory, and interpolates between frames.

Unreal has different themes for its environments, but they aren't as simple as "This is the medieval hub, this is the futuristic hub." Architecture is mixed, but mixed logically. Because this planet has different factions (some monsters are just as likely to attack other monsters as they are you), the monsters have their own artificial intelligence and are very smart. They won't just stand there and let you (or someone else) blast them. They are so smart that even when you lock onto them they will try to outmaneuver your blasts.

You begin the game in a futuristic-looking prison vessel, but soon find yourself outside. The Skaarj, the invaders of this world, seem to like dark caverns. The Nali, the poor enslaved schleps, inhabit primitive structures such as castles. Although the architecture is familiar, it has its own distinctive look. They don't just grab some cultural theme and make a hub around it. Nali structures, like the Nali themselves, have a consistent look to them. They wanted to create a look that was obviously alien, but still within human grasp. There are several different factions on the planet, so there are lots of different environments and looks—mine shafts, factories, alien ships, castles and so on. There's lots of variety when you're playing the game, so you don't feel like there are actual boundaries to the level. We were shown an enormous castle area. You could go around it, fall into the moat, and then fight your way inside where the adventure continued.

Despite plenty of eye candy, the final requirements for *Unreal* won't be astronomical. They're aiming for around a P133 16 MB RAM range, which really isn't that much of a leap. The graphics engine is software driven as opposed to hardware driven. Obviously it will look and play better on a Pentium II with 32MB and an accelerator, but even the un-accelerated versions still have colored lighting. We saw *Unreal* in 320 x 240 mode, and it still looked pretty darn good.

UNREAL's AI (Artificial Intelligence)

Another variable that will put *Unreal* more than a cut above its competition is the care being put into the AI. For this they called in a ringer—the Albert Einstein of gaming AI—Reaperbot creator Steven Polge. The creature AI is handled in two ways. First, you've got it directly coded in certain instances in UnrealScript. This is used when the designers want the creature to behave in a specific way. An example of this was when Bleszinski showed us an instance where a Skaarj was patrolling an area because a security alert was active. The designers can also "influence" the creatures actions by using the editor to assign various behaviors to the creatures. For example, how aggressive do they want the creature to be? Does the player look injured or pumped up? What kind of weapons, does he/she have? An *Unreal* creature, depending on its intelligence, will sum all that up and decide to attack or run to the hills.

They can even tell when you've got a lock on them with a heat-seeking round from the 8-ball gun, and will try to shake it. In some shooters you see a monster around the corner, unaware of you. So you shoot at it, but hit the corner of the wall and miss. The monster remains blissfully unaware. This is not an *Unreal* monster. The creatures in this game hear sounds and will react to them differently, depending on their intelligence. This means that if you start a fight in a whole other room, smarter monsters will drop by to join the party and check out who or what is making all of the noise. Forget about easy tricks to defeat monsters. Just going through a doorway and strafing in and out may fool some of *Unreal*'s dumber monsters, but smarter ones like the Skaarj will figure you out.

They may try to find a new way to approach you, or wait for you to show your face and then fire. *Unreal* creatures have a much better sense of their surroundings and the geography around them. As a certain creature travels around an area, it leaves what are called "path nodes." They were described to us as "bread crumbs" that a monster leaves behind as it moves, so the more it travels the more it learns about the terrain. The more it learns about the terrain—where the dead ends are, which paths lead back where they started—the better attack plans it can devise. In short, the longer that creature is alive and moving, the smarter it gets.

"If *Unreal* really wants to hurt you, it won't fling 20 or 30 Neanderthals with guns. It will send three or four guys with brains. Or perhaps one guy with brains, but three henchman who follow the orders. Some monsters form teams to increase their effectiveness. They will act cooperatively in order to achieve a goal—mainly, to rip you a new one," Polge added.

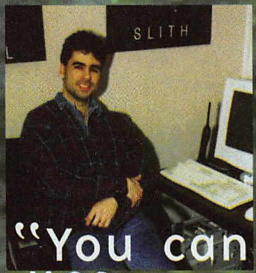
The team leader will order creatures to flank the player, one go left, one go right... It may order someone to go for help, and it may call for everyone to retreat. The ever-changing gameplay will alter those plans. If you take out two henchmen, the leader may re-evaluate the situation and come up with an answer it doesn't like, so it will retreat. If you retreat from a wide-open corridor, it will also rethink the best way of getting at you, if any. Killing the team leader can obviously throw a group assault into total chaos. This is an early strategy tip, to get you started. The purpose of giving the creatures of *Unreal* this kind of intelligence is to make it more like going one-on-one with a real creature, like a deathmatch. So this does not mean that creatures just want to kill you—they also want to live and will behave accordingly.

"Like the rest of the game, nothing is absolutely final. I have a huge list of ideas and I keep adding them as we go along," says Polge. "There's always room for AI improvement, until they can beat you at the Turing test." "The game is a real pain in the ass to test, because nothing ever happens in the same way at the same time. Things happen differently and that is why *Unreal* is a great game, but tough on testers," Bleszinski, lead level designer on *Unreal*, said.

SINGLE PLAYER UNREAL

Unreal places you aboard a prison ship on your way to hard time in a distant part of the galaxy, when the gravity of a mysterious planet forces the ship to crash land. Your goal is to kick ass and get off of the planet according to Cliff Bleszinski.

Unreal's story develops within the game, through the logbooks and little in-game events which move things along. Early in the game you're still trying to get off the prison ship and arm yourself, when you come to a door. It sounds like someone's being slowly eaten alive behind that door. We were introduced to some spine-crunching screaming and gruesome sound effects, and then we were allowed to enter. We only got to see the culprit in the shadows briefly, but we saw his handiwork. He left quite a mess. From events like this, it's obvious that *Unreal* knows when to hit you with full frontal blood and guts, and subtle unnerving mind games. Kind of like an engaging thriller.



"You can put creatures on a team and they attack differently. As long as the team leader's still alive... he'll be ordering guys around." **Steven Polge**

The sky textures you see in these screenshots are temporary.
We honestly didn't think they looked that bad. But apparently the folks at DE have something better planned.





UNREAL **MULTIPLAYER** AND THE WEAPONS

We were given the opportunity to test-drive *Unreal* in the multiplayer mode. The deathmatch arena we played in was pretty basic, a series of levels with a wide-open center. At the bottom was a pit of slime. Most floors of the levels had a few corridors here and there leading to more confined areas and hidden items.

The weapon of choice is the Razorjack, which fires a blade over great distances. In secondary fire mode, it can bounce of walls and objects, so if you're a good pool player, you can easily nail someone hiding around a corner, or the back of the ledge above or below you. The 8-ball gun fires six grenades and will also be a very popular weapon according to the mighty Bleszinski, who kicked my ass.

The biogun was also cool, as it fires a ball of green goo—the waste product from the ore mined from the planet. The "glop" explodes on contact with a player, or sticks to a surface. It will evaporate after a time, but if a player gets too close—KABOOM BABY BOOM. A clever player can lay a trail of this goop, like claymore mines, write his name, whatever and then start the chain reaction. If two blobs of this stuff hit each other there is a big green explosion.

Every weapon you find can get you the kill, and no single weapon (at least that I could tell) seems to overpower the others.

Even the 8-ball gun, which can do major damage, requires careful aiming and timing, not instant release. While you're carefully lining one person up, another guy with a "smaller" weapon could take you down.

Unreal allows you to select from a variety of male and female characters (which can be further customized by the editor). You can also pick a right or left handed player or center your weapons.

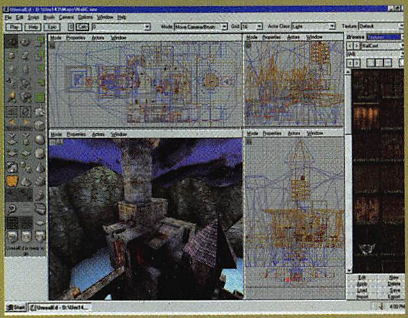
The game will also support a co-op mode but perhaps the most exciting idea behind *Unreal* multiplayer is the "Server Intraverse" as the Digital Extreme folks called it. They didn't want a clumsy chart thing when it came time to select multiplayer play. "This system will be supported because you have to start somewhere," Shreiber says. But more than that, there will be internal links to servers. Some doors in *Unreal* may not lead to another room, but a whole other server. Think of it as an *Unreal* level with hyperlinks, only instead of linking to another page, you link to someone else's level on another server.

All you will need to do is create a spawning point for your character on the new level, and a doorway in your own level that leads to it. Just click the properties menu for the doorway, identify the server location, and it's done. All of this can be done through *Unreal*'s level editor.

EDITING UNREAL-THE **LEVEL EDITOR**

Bleszinski and Schreiber took the time to show the *Unreal* level editor in action. A demo version of the editor will be included with the game and a fully documented commercial version will also be available and will come





with a complete manual with tons of examples according to Schreiber. This is the actual level editor being used by the Digital Extremes staff we are talking about here.

The editor has toolbar shortcuts to build basic rooms shapes and most things are a menu, mouse click or floating toolbar away. The editor is also icon based, and laid out like a standard Windows graphics application. To design an actual basic level with monsters, items, some pillars, lighting and spawning points only took the designers 30 seconds. Now the level wasn't super, mind you, but it was complete; I even gave it a try and it is super easy to use.

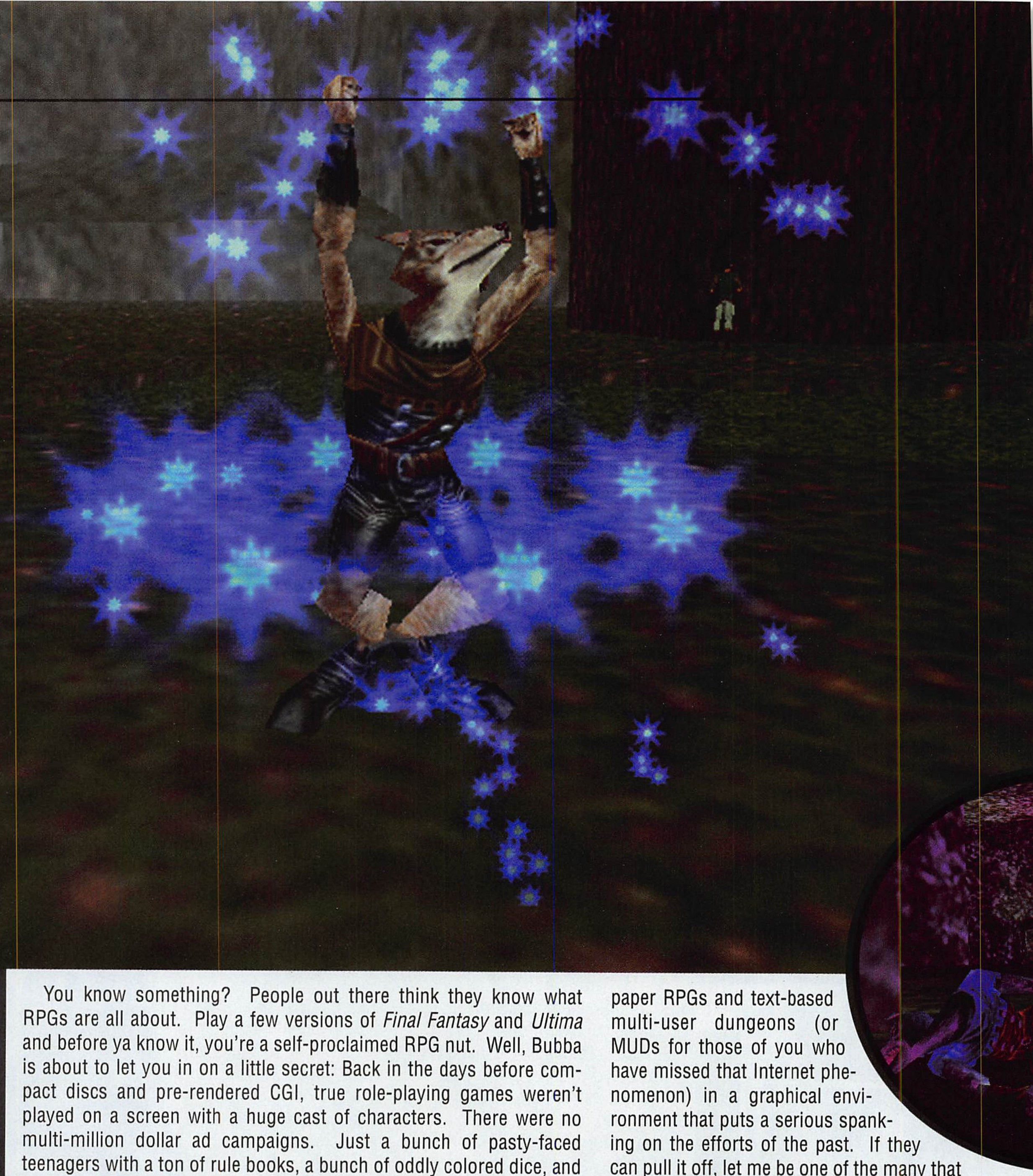
UNREAL **OBSERVATIONS**

The game certainly does live up to its name and it should be an extraordinary title. *Unreal* has innovations where they count and it brings great improvements to the genre. Not many games give you stunning graphics and sophisticated enemy AI and (finally) a level editor that the average gamer can use. Add to that the "Server Intraverse" and you're talking one heck of a package.

The *Unreal* engine has already been licensed out by three major companies, including Microprose, Ion Storm, and Legend Entertainment. When asked how they felt about the impressive industry demand for a game engine that hasn't even been finished yet, Cliff Bleszinski said, "We're actually pretty physically aroused by it," causing laughter all around. He also added that such interest is a real confidence booster for the team. It also kills any doubt about whether *Unreal* is any good or not. What we saw made believers out of us. This game is truly *Unreal* and should be on store shelves sometime this summer if not before. "The game will be released when we feel it's done," Bleszinski said.



EverQuest



You know something? People out there think they know what RPGs are all about. Play a few versions of *Final Fantasy* and *Ultima* and before ya know it, you're a self-proclaimed RPG nut. Well, Bubba is about to let you in on a little secret: Back in the days before compact discs and pre-rendered CGI, true role-playing games weren't played on a screen with a huge cast of characters. There were no multi-million dollar ad campaigns. Just a bunch of pasty-faced teenagers with a ton of rule books, a bunch of oddly colored dice, and an imagination. Not that I have anything against the way console RPGs have turned out (I am as much of a Square-head as anyone), but the modern video gaming RPG has, in all honesty, lost sight of its origins. Finally, a title is on the horizon that seeks to regain those roots, and for the first time in a long while, this editor has been reduced to a babbling stammer over a game (as opposed to the idea of having to tie my own shoes in the morning... what would I do without ECM and Reubus?). Sony Interactive's latest PC effort, *EverQuest,* is not only an answer to every old school role-player's prayers, it is the type of effort that could change gaming as we know it.

A role-playing title set in a persistent gaming universe, *EverQuest* is seen by many gaming historians as the logical follow-up to Origin's recent smash-hit RPG, *Ultima OnLine*. Not that this comparison is unfair or unwarranted, but the more I think about this, the more I am forced to chuckle a little. Yeah, both titles are RPGs. Both allow thousands of players to play the game simultaneously. And yeah, both are tales of swords and sorcery that take place in far off fantasy lands, but the comparison ends there. EQ's creators are a group of hardcore RPG enthusiasts that are looking to do more than create a place where people can play a fantasy title with hundreds of players. These self-professed RPG addicts are looking to recreate the experience of pen-and-paper RPGs and text-based multi-user dungeons (or MUDs for those of you who have missed that Internet phenomenon) in a graphical environment that puts a serious spanking on the efforts of the past. If they can pull it off, let me be one of the many that have said this game will make *UO* look like a bad child who is about to get its due.

EverQuest will feature tons of elements that will set it apart in the role-playing arena. 12 different races—from humans, elves and dwarves, to gnomes, ogres and trolls—will make appearances in the game. 14 classes—including classics such as fighters, mages, and thieves to some more obscure gigs such as druids, enchanters, and shamans—will be available to players. Over 40 unique skills and abilities such as swimming, duel weapon-wielding, and what any good multi-player game

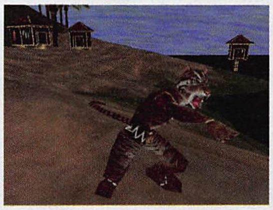
EverQuest
Developer: SISA
Publisher: SISA
Format: CD
Difficulty: Hard
Number of Players: 1000's
Available: 4th quarter

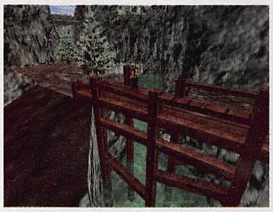
















worth it's salt must have to be any real fun: back-stabbing (hehehe). It will also include hundreds of spells, five enormous continents, and a level-based experience points system. And of special importance for all you guys and gals who continuously get whacked by lame-ass gamers who mistook the OnLine RPG for a large scale game of Quake, EverQuest will have an interesting feature gamers have dubbed the "pk switch." This will allow players to determine if they want to engage in player vs. player combat or avoid it altogether. These elements and more are all part of what makes EQ, easily, one of the most ambitious experiments in gaming to date.



This little project comes with a heavy price, however. Aside from looking to take gameplay into a new dimension, the gang at Sony are also taking the online RPG into a new visual dimension, sporting a killer 3-D engine and some hefty hardware requirements that are enough to make a lot of PC gamers cringe. Following the trend of most high-end PC titles, *EQ* will require 3-D acceleration, a first for a game of this type, and from the looks of the shots in this preview, it will be more than worth it. The visuals alone are enough to make me wanna upgrade. Each character will be created from the ground up by players, right down to the hairstyle, and if it floats your boat, body piercing! Nose rings, anyone? And the monsters! Let me just say that ugly has never looked so good. The world itself has shown glimpses of being absolutely breathtaking, with dark dungeons, treacherous mountain passes, and even cool areas like cities built in the trunks of giant trees. But with all these fancy looks, it will be interesting to see if a persistent world game can pull it off and still keep gamers happy. Forget the load of spells this game will have, the real magic will come in if the development team can manage to take these high end visuals and match the game speed seen in similar efforts, because if this games lags, so will *EverQuest's* chances of making gaming history.

A great quest now lies before SISA and the *EverQuest* Team. Can they slay the laggin' dragon and turn these incredible shots into a playable title that captures the spirit of classic pen-and-paper RPGs? As it stands now, they claim they are up to the challenge and if that is the case, *EverQuest* looks to not only be one of the greatest role-playing titles ever created, but one of the most revolutionary titles in the history of gaming. ***B***



Ogres, trolls, and dwarves, Oh my!

Trespasser

Whenever I sit down to discuss the virtues of console vs. PC gaming with some of my friends, the debate (read: fist fight) always boils down to how console programmers are 'real' men as opposed to PC programmers that aren't (I know, we have too much time on our hands). See, console programmers have to cope with very little RAM, slow CD drives, and (in the case of the N64) a lack of storage space. Meanwhile, PC programmers get all the latest Pentium technology (no whining, Mac owners), million-poly 3D accelerators, and enough RAM to satiate even Kid Fan's voracious appetite (and trust me, it is voracious). If a PC developer can't get a game to run after a half-hearted attempt—no problem!—just up the system requirements. The way I see it, PC programmers should be able to do anything if they could perform even half the tricks (in software) that console programmers are capable of, trapped as they are in their little $150 boxes. Which brings us to Dreamworks Interactive's latest title: *Trespasser.* Finally, there's a PC game that proves that, at the very least, you don't need one of those new-fangled 3D accelerators to generate some hot 3D graphics and gameplay.

Taking place a year-and-a-half after the second *Jurassic Park* feature film, *Trespasser* casts you in the role of Anne, a young woman (voiced by *Good Will Hunting*'s Minnie Driver) stranded on the 'Site B' island mentioned in the film. Her only goal is to get off the island alive, which is easier said than done, given that Raptors aren't known for their pleasant dispositions.

More than just *Quake* with dinosaurs, *Trespasser* is a remarkable title that features, essentially, an entire 15 sq. mile island to explore. Essentially, you travel through the various levels of the game, solving puzzles and fighting off less-than-cordial dinosaurs. Puzzles range from the simple: getting through a huge, barred gate; to the complex: trying to get a broken down generator back online. For the most part, the puzzles are well-constructed and we'll delve deeper come review time.

The single most amazing part of *Trespasser*, however, is the fact that everything has size, weight, and mass. The game team has two physicists on it, and it shows in the early version of the game we previewed. Gone are the days of the bottomless pack, as you can only carry as much weight as Anne can manage. Physics are everything is this game. Can't open a gate? Grab a log and batter the door down, hoping the extra weight and leverage will be enough to smash it open. Raptor up close as you blast it with a shotgun? Watch that puppy fly back from the force of impact. One of the most beautiful effects would have to be the way water ripples when you throw something into it (such as yourself). Items that are less dense even float—the attention to detail and the amount of math going on here is enough to bring back my worst high school algebra and calculus nightmares (thankfully it's carefully cloaked in a solid game).

At this point in the going, the graphics are impressive. While we've all grown quite spoiled by games constantly running on 3D accelerators, *Trespasser* does not rely on 3D cards as a crutch to generate more performance. Instead, those cards are completely optional—meaning the game will look good simply with software-generated graphics. Granted, the rippling water effects look better with the 3D card than the software-generated waves, but it's not as huge a leap as you might think. Textures look good for the most part, but a lot of what we saw was merely placeholder—pretty good placeholders, methinks! The movement of the dinos is amazing, and they move with unearthly grace, constantly adjusting to the totally 3D terrain. Oh, and on top of it all, *Trespasser* supports software bump-mapping; something that hasn't even been seen on 3D cards up until very recently.

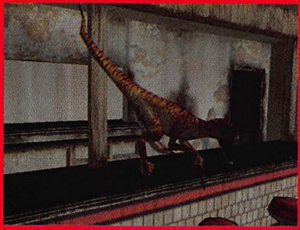
Scheduled for a 3rd quarter debut, *Trespasser* seems to be setting its sights on becoming the next big thing, if Dreamworks has anything to say about it. They certainly seem to be moving in the right direction (that's a mild understatement). And if nothing else, at least this game finally gives my PC-centric friends some ammunition to pummel me with. Now, about that price thing... ***ECM***



"A 3D PC game that doesn't require a 3D accelerator-my heart be still!"

Trespasser
Developer: Dreamworks Interactive
Publisher: Dreamworks Interactive
Format: CD
Difficulty: Adjustable
Number of Players: 1
Available: 3rd quarter

Trespasser





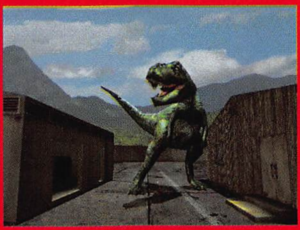














Half-Life



I'm about half-sick of all these friggin' corridor shooters. It seems like half the games that come out these days are trying to cash in on the *Quake* craze. Nothing but half-finished, half-assed unoriginal nonsense that has given me half a mind to stop playing PC games altogether. Well, it appears someone has taken half a hint to this line of thought, and the gang over at Valve are hard at work tweaking the game that in many peoples minds, upstaged id's *Quake 2* at last year's Electronic Entertainment Expo, *Half-Life*. After this already impressive title experienced some delays and some revision in key areas, *HL* is gearing up to make the gaming public drop their collective jaws.

You see, *Half-Life* was supposed to be released in November of last year, but Valve, the game's developers, are taking their time trying to get the little things right with this title and they have Sierra's full support. Recently, we got a hands-on look at *Half-Life* and we could easily see that this game is much more than a simple *Quake* clone.

The *Half-Life* demo featured some high-tech goodies that made it instantly distinct from the crowd. The game's monsters have been created with Valve's proprietary skeletal animation system. This killer feature has enabled Valve to send the character polygon count through the roof, giving the game's characters very fluid movements and allowing them to be more structurally complex than ever before. Current action games have difficulty handling monsters with more than 500 polygons, *Half-Life's* monsters contain over 6,000 polygons each!

Half-Life will also feature out-of-the-box support for the enhanced version of Worldcraft--which will be included with *Half-Life* and will aid the games' many technological innovations, including 24-bit textures, sophisticated rendering technologies such as eye-popping colored lighting, translucency, and blurring. All of these features will be implemented in the software so that you won't have to shell out the big bucks for the latest greatest 3-D card to enjoy them.

"By building these features into the software, we can make them an essential part of the gameplay, rather than just eye-candy," said Gabe Newell, managing director of Valve. "For instance, we use breakable glass everywhere. We use colored lights to convey mood, and even clues. Our forcefields cycle in and out of existence, giving the player a blurred hint about a different part of the game, or a temporary bridge to run across. The designers can do all of this without worrying about fitting every monster, texture, architectural detail and effect into a single 256 color palette." *Half-Life* will support Open-GL, Direct 3D, MMX hardware acceleration and 3Dfx.

"*Half-Life* looks amazing without hardware acceleration," said Ken Williams, CEO of Sierra On-Line. "But those who have the additional hardware are going to be shocked by the realism that's been achieved."

The game will also have advanced editing features including vertex manipulation and clipping planes for faster shaping of the architecture.

"Worldcraft has always been known for its power and ease of use," said Ben Morris, who also developed the popular *Doom Construction Kit*. "But the newest version of Worldcraft will be even more advanced since it is being built for *Half-Life's* innovative engine. Level developers are going to love building new worlds for *Half-Life*."

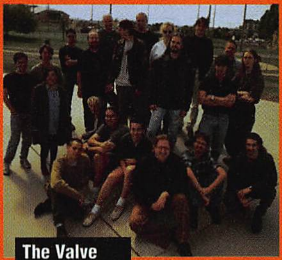
THE HALF-LIFE STORY

As a player of *Half-Life* you will find yourself assigned to a top-secret experiment at a decommissioned missile base where you've made an amazing breakthrough. Your team has developed a cross-dimensional portal through which you can glimpse an alternate universe

Half-Life
Developer: Valve
Publisher: Sierra
Format: CD
Difficulty: Adjustable
Number of Players: 1
Available: 3rd quarter

populated by intellectually superior beings. You attempt to break through and probe the world further by generating a power spike using forgotten nuclear warheads left behind at the base, but the plan doesn't work and the result is total disaster. The beings on the other side wanted in while you were trying to get out. You and your co-workers are set upon by ghastly invading creatures from the other dimension.

Now you must try to contain or destroy the creatures before they eradicate you and everyone else. But there is one fairly significant glitch, the CIA is sending a squad of "Cleaners" to shut you down and cover up the entire affair. Besides battling the agents, you are also battling the clock as government operatives are closing in, unaware of the thermonuclear weapons housed inside. The CIA cleaners have begun to plant explosives and destroy the base. If you don't hustle, the chain reaction could trigger a nuclear blast big enough to destroy the entire Western United States.


The Valve team at rest

With pieces of your colleagues scattered around the lab, you must fight your way past crafty alien monsters en-route to the surface, where a full-scale battle has erupted between the invaders and government troops. The military is just as interested in silencing you as they are in eradicating the aliens. In a last ditch attempt to reach the alien world and foil their monstrous schemes, you must try to figure out how to make peace. Along the way you'll come across experimental weaponry, death squads, and unique environments. As you will soon find out, not every monster is your enemy and not everything is as it appears.

STAR STRUCK

Valve empowered cyber-punk author and journalist Marc Laidlaw to the *Half-Life* team as a writer and game designer on the project. In addition to building levels for the game, Marc will be applying his award-winning writing skills to the game to ensure the Valve stories and scripts are as intense and entertaining as the other elements of its games. Marc is the author of a half dozen novels, including *Dad's Nuke* and *The 37th Manadala,* and winner of the International Horror Guild's award for Best Novel in 1996. In a recent cover story about id Software for Wired magazine, he mentioned that he thought that "level designers had the coolest jobs on earth" and is looking forward to making a contribution to *Half-Life* and other Valve games.

Ben Morris, the developer of Worldcraft, is also a member of the *Half-Life* team and he has been working on the editor, as well as creating additional tools for *Half-Life* add-on developers.

"Having Ben Morris and Marc Laidlaw on the team reflects our desire to build technologically advanced games with innovative gameplay," said Gabe Newell, Valve's co-founder and Managing Director. "We know gamers want powerful tools and extensibility to get the most from state-of-the-art action games, and we know games are already fans of Marc's writing and story-telling in more traditional media. Ben and Marc will both have significant impact on *Half-Life.*

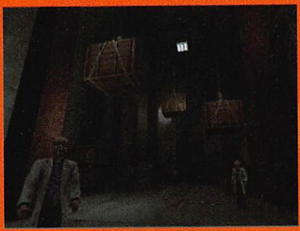
Half-Life's Artificial Intelligence

Half-Life's non-player characters have serious smarts, often outsmarting players with some cool tactics, including organized group behaviors, progressive strategic movements, and the ability to assess risks and take cover if necessary.

"Monsters in current action games are pretty predictable," said Steve Bond, Valve game developer working on *Half-Life.* "Once they see you, they simply turn and attack. We wanted to make an experience that was more alive and unpredictable. *Half-Life's* monsters aren't on a suicide mission: they don't want to die and they'll do some unexpectedly crafty things to avoid getting killed."

Forget these smart bad guys. After seeing this one in action, we'd have to say that the smart move will be to keep a close eye on this title, as it is not only a visual show-stopper, but a hard-core attempt to bring single player 3-D gaming back to the forefront of PC shooters. If this one comes off half as well as it appears to be at this stage in the game, we'll be in for a real winner.








StarCraft

The wait for Blizzard's next real-time strategy monster, *StarCraft*, has been lengthy but worth it. Essentially an overhauled *WarCraft II* with a sci-fi theme, *StarCraft* is based upon the same gameplay principles: mass resourcing, building the bigger army, and trying to stop the enemy's harvesting.

Now don't get me wrong, *SC* is very different from *WCii* (a game I was still playing up until *SC*'s release). For starters, there are now three different races in *StarCraft* (whereas *WCII* basically had only one race, since humans and orcs built the same and had nearly equivalent units). Each race in *StarCraft* builds differently and there are NO unit equivalents across the races (not like Grunt/Footmen in *WCII*, which were basically the same).

Here's an example of what I'm talking about: 1) a human SCV (peon) physically constructs a building, moving around and erecting it over time. When he's done, he's free to go off and do something else. 2) a Zerg drone mutates itself into the building. Meaning, that when a Zerg building has finished construction, you've forever lost that unit because it is rooted into the ground. 3) a Protoss Probe goes to the spot instructed, and instantly summons a warp to their homeworld of Aiur. After a certain amount of time elapses, the building warps in automatically; and the Probe is freed up to other tasks as soon as he sets the warp down.

But the new features of *StarCraft* don't end there. Blizzard has thrown in a bunch of improvements to the game's environment: waypoints, group hotkeys, training multiple units in the same building, elevation, and drastically improved unit AI just to name a few. The single-player mode has been expanded into an epic tale spanning all three races, with key characters recurring as you play all 30 episodes. But character development and plot also play a much bigger plot in the storyline of *StarCraft's* single-player mode: there's deception, empires, power-hungry dictators, rebels, vigilantes, death, and more.

Even though the single-player mode is great fun and has FMV sequences to boot, the key selling point of *StarCraft* is the incredible replay value of the multi-player game. Since you're automatically given free access to Battlenet when you buy the game, you're given the chance to chat with *Diablo/StarCraft* junkies online, and you can set up pick-up games at any time of the day or night. With a huge user base, there's never a time when you won't find someone to answer your challenge on Battlenet. And best of all, it's free... (as long as you have your own Internet Service Provider).

And if multi-player gaming ever gets boring for you, *StarCraft* comes with a map editor which lets you construct your own playing field. Once you're done with it, distribute it to your friends, and go at it on your custom made level.

The graphics in *StarCraft* are much improved over *WCII*, and incredibly detailed, a Blizzard trademark. Units are so well-animated that you see the flash of a marine's gun on his faceplate whenever he fires. Fiery explosions and bloody bursting are rampant in the game, leading to a 17+ Teen rating (and there is very, very minor cussing in one of the CG sequences).

The sound effects are good, but the voices are perfect. Every unit responds to your selecting it with a variety of acknowledgements; and if you keep harassing a unit by clicking on it repeatedly, it gets annoyed with you and says so. This is a classic Blizzard extra, going back to *WCII* and even the cows in *Diablo*. The human wraith pilots speak in this slow, cocky, drawl "I'm just curious... why'm I so goood?" The Protoss Observor (a satellite) starts picking up obscure stations when you click on it too many times such as the witch in *Diablo* or the *WCII* disco song from the expansion pack. Music varies with each campaign, the Terran music being the best... while the Zerg and Protoss music is more atmospheric than inspiring.



StarCraft

Developer: Blizzard
Publisher: Blizzard
Format: CD
Difficulty: Moderate
Number of Players: 1-8
Available: Now

StarCraft



Gameplay (need I say it?), is perfection. There's a reason *WarCraft II* was game of the year when it first came out, and it still remains a rocking real-time strat game. The gameplay, strategies per map, and variety of multiplayer gaming can leave you amused for months easily. For the most part, *StarCraft* plays like *WarCraft II*, but the new additions to *SC* add extra elements of strategy to the field as well. The air units are much more powerful in *StarCraft*, and much more of a threat than they were in *WCII*. Because of this, the anti-air units are much more of a necessity when constructing armies now than ever before. This means that if you want your army to survive, you're going to have to coordinate attack groups of ground units and anti-air units all at the same time. Thankfully, the ability to group 12 units and set them as a hotkey makes it easy to move groups of 36 units at the touch of three different keys.

If you liked *WCII*, you'll like *StarCraft*. If you didn't like *WCII* (perhaps it was the medieval theme), then the sci-fi motif might be for you. And lastly, the best elements from sci-fi films such as *Aliens* have been thrown into this game—there's dropships, marines fighting aliens, chest-bursters, Alien Queens. What more could you want?





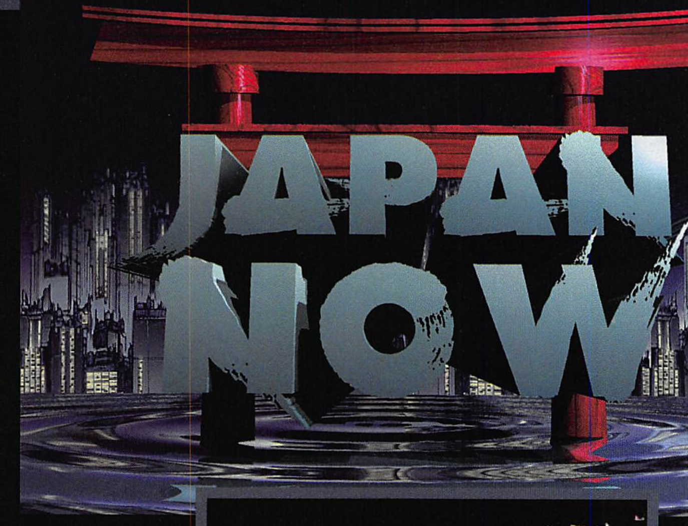
Now I can't wait to get home and play some *StarCraft*. If you want to find me on Battlenet, my handle is "Ugame" and my homepage is devoted to *StarCraft* as well now. Visit it at http://home.earthlink.net/~gngo/ *E*



"This should be good..."







Welcome otaku of all shades, to the first step in the complete re-birth of Japan Now. As you've probably picked up on, Japan Now has moved away from what made it both the industry's and the fan's number one source of information relating to the wonders of the import marketplace. Well, we've noticed too and it's time that we did something about it. Beginning with this issue, we're changing for the better; a renaissance, if you will.

To that end, we're moving back to what made Japan Now the standard-bearer in the import arena: Check out the next 25 pages for all the latest and hottest import games that are burning up the charts in Japan. And not to fear, we've even thrown in some of the more quirky titles that you'll never see outside of Japan (unless of course you're among the import elite).

Beyond that, we're making a concerted effort to bring our Japan Now news section up to where we feel it should have been all along. Look for interviews with Japan's leading developers (and the more obscure as well), as well as the hottest info and rumors making waves in the Land of the Rising Sun.

However, after that, we need your help: What do you want from Japan Now? Above and beyond the items already mentioned, what is it that's missing? Do you want Top Ten lists for the best-selling Japanese games? Coverage of Japanese toys? Or is it something else entirely? Any input is welcome and fire away those e-mails to suggestions@gamefan.com, with the subject line Japan Now.


Tokyo, at night... you gotta love it!

This month we have the best coverage of the Tokyo Game Show going as well as a tremendous number of import reviews. Games like Square's latest RPG epic, *Parasite Eve*, and the first look at Capcom's *Vampire Savior*. Heck, we even cover a couple of shooters this month, *Battle Garegga* for Sega's Saturn and Taito's latest PS blast-'em-up, *G-Darius*.

Game Show

In late March, Tokyo was recovering from its Winter Olympic hangover and to help out that process the Computer Entertainment Software Association (CESA) once again hosted Japan's largest exhibition of PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and PC games. There were plenty of new releases on hand as well as several tournaments being hosted, including a weekend-long *Tekken 3* tournament being held on the show floor. This isn't just a show for the press and buyers, like the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). In Japan there is only one day for business people (the first Friday of the show) and then the other two days the doors are open to the public. So those last two days of the show the men with the white gloves (you know the ones that shove people into the trains) had to work overtime. The place was jam packed with thousands of screaming gamers, and it was quite an awesome spectacle. I have never seen anything like it in my 12 years covering the gaming scene.



The Tekken 3 event


the Makujari Messe

This year the show was held at the Makujari Messe, a large convention center located about 90 minutes by train outside of Tokyo. There were 96 companies packed into over 1,000 booths, exhibiting close to 450 titles new and old.

The weather cooperated, for the most part, except for the wind (at times it felt like Chicago as opposed to Tokyo), and the turn-out was exceptional, making this event one of the most successful in the event's history. GameFan was the only U.S.-based magazine invited to the state of the gaming function hosted by CESA on the first day of the show. All of the industry movers and shakers were there including Sony Computer Entertainment's Ken Kutaragi and Terry Takanaka and several high profile executives from Konami of Japan, Capcom, as well as several key PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Sega Katana developers.

CESA was founded by companies associated with the gaming industry in order to handle the assorted issues arising from the content of the games. The organization researches and investigates the electronic gaming industry through seminars, workshops, and focus groups. Their goal is to contribute to the wholesome development of the worldwide software industry and the issues related to that. Their focus isn't just on Japan and they were very gracious hosts, with plenty of questions relating to the U.S. gaming market—and about


Video Cowboy, where are you?

GameFan's readers specifically.

There were plenty of great games on display and now its time to let you in on the rest of the show.

Like the E3 show of last year, this year's Spring Tokyo Game Show was more of a holding pattern type show. There were virtually no surprises, and companies seem content to keep cranking out mostly quality software across all the platforms. The PlayStation clearly dominated the show, with a decent showing by Sega, and very little in the way of N64 software to be found. What were the highlights and lowlights of the show? Well, here's a quick rundown of each of the major companies involved in the show (with some smaller developers thrown in for good measure).



This guy is so big he gets 2 girls!



.. you got game desu?

Sony

Sony's main focus, believe it or not, was the hot new puzzle game *XI* (pronounced 'sai'). Move various throwing die around a square board with a little munchkin type creature, matching up like numbers with like numbers. The trick here is that you have to match a die numbered '4' with another numbered '4' and you have to have four at once to make them disappear. It sounds a little silly, and if you don't know what you're doing it'll be time to pay a visit to the Hair Club for Men (or Women). An addictive little puzzle game that knocks *Intelligent Qube* off the map.



...this was just the cash machines



...Parappa Clocks?!? ECM!?!

Beyond *XI*, Sony didn't have much in the way of surprises or excitement. There was, of course, yet another *Parappa*-style game in the form of *Stolen Song*. In addition to that, there was the *Burning Rangers*-influenced *Fire Panic*. Other than that, well, it was pretty cricket-like around Sony.

Sega

Three words: *Sakura Taisen 2* (two words and a number, I guess). The sequel to Sega/RED's dating-mech sim, was the focus at Sega's booth and with initial sales in excess of 350,000 units, it was probably a good move to make this the big game of the show. More dating, more (and better) mech combat make up this hot little sequel. Quick note: Unless you know Japanese steer way clear of this game.

Sega's other big title was the undersea adventure title, *Deep Fear*. While details on the game are a bit sketchy, it sounds quite a bit like *Resident Evil* underwater (can't beat that, can ya?). Of course the chances of seeing this title in English are about zero, so we'll cover this puppy in-depth as soon as something more concrete surfaces (heh, get it? Underwater... surfaces... oh nevermind).

Rounding out Sega's showing was the 32X update, *Super Tempo*, now with tons of color and everything that made the game such a, uh, hit the first time around (OK, so it didn't exactly set the world on fire). This one looks and plays much better than the ill-fated 32X rev. There was also *Shining Force 3 Part 2*, which will not be released in the US, <sigh>. More Worldwide Soccer in the form of *World Cup '98*, as well as yet another *Neon Genesis Evangelion* game. All in all, a solid if unspectacular showing from Sega (hey, when you have *Sakura Wars 2*, what else do ya need?).



... car?.. What car?!?!

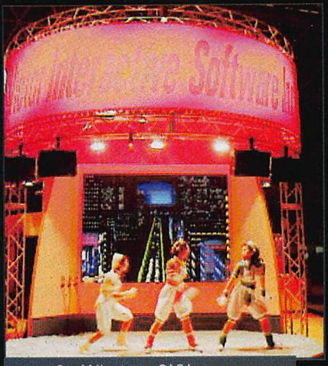
Capcom

No surprises at Capcom's booth this year. *D&D Collection* put in an appearance, but only the first game, *Tower of Doom*, was there. It was looking solid, but it's about time Capcom got the lead out on these. *Shadow Over Mystaria* was nowhere to be seen, although 4-Meg RAM cart compatibility is still planned. Oh, and of course it's now Saturn only as the PS rev was canceled a ways back.

Vampire Savior for Sega Saturn was also on the show floor, but no sign of the PS version. Needless to say (since it's in the review in the following pages) this is a flawless port to Sega's Saturn with 4 Meg power support.

Marvel Super Heroes vs. Capcom was announced but was not on the show floor. While no firm release date was set you can expect the next in Capcom's *Vs.* series sometime in the 3rd quarter. Also supports the 4 Meg cart.

In what proved to be the biggest news of the show for ECM, Capcom announced two collection discs. One's a compilation of *Ghouls 'n Ghosts* games and the other is a compilation of the *19XX* shooter series. Each are for the Saturn and PlayStation. The *Ghouls* disc includes *Ghost n' Goblins*, *Ghouls n' Ghosts*, and *Super Ghouls n' Ghosts*. The *19XX Collection* contains *1942*, *1943*, and *1943 Dash*. No sign of *1941*, though (looks like the SuperGrafx is still the only place for that game). Now if we could only get a disc with *Strider*, *UN Squadron*, *Carrier Airwing*, *Willow*, *Forgotten Worlds*, etc., etc.



... car?.. What car?!?!





Bomberman toys!

Amazingly, Capcom also featured a new *Rockman* (*Megaman*) game for the Super Famicom (SNES), a 32 MB cart that just goes to show that there is still life and interest in Nintendo's 16-bit standard bearer of the past. Too bad we won't be getting this over here. Time to fire up the ol' SNES and converter one last time, I suppose.

Square

What did Square have to show, you ask? Well, in addition to the recently released *Final Fantasy 5* remake for PlayStation, Square showed *Final Fantasy VII* for the PC! All of you out there wondering and waiting to see if the PC could do an adequate job of *FFVII* can stop wondering, as this game looks stunning. Combine the power of the latest 3D accelerators with the hi-res display only a computer monitor can provide and you've got a game to die for. Now Square can go and sell another million or so units.

Beyond *FFVII*, Square showed *Brave Fencer Mushashiden*. Heralded by the US gaming press as Square's answer to Nintendo's *Zelda: TOOT, BFM* looked really hot, with solid polygonal graphics replete with all the wonderful effects the PS can muster. While we wouldn't call it a '*Zelda* killer' (the environments are not free-roaming), it certainly looks set to do some big numbers in the Land of the Rising Sun as well as abroad. Certainly one that Dangohead is itching to get his hands on.

Of course, what mention of Square's showing would be complete without *Parasite Eve*. Seeing as how this is also fully reviewed this issue, we'll spare you the gorier details here (it is gory), and let you check it out in the following review section).

Namco

What can you say about the Namco booth? How 'bout *Tekken 3*, *Tekken 3*, *Tekken 3*. Yep,

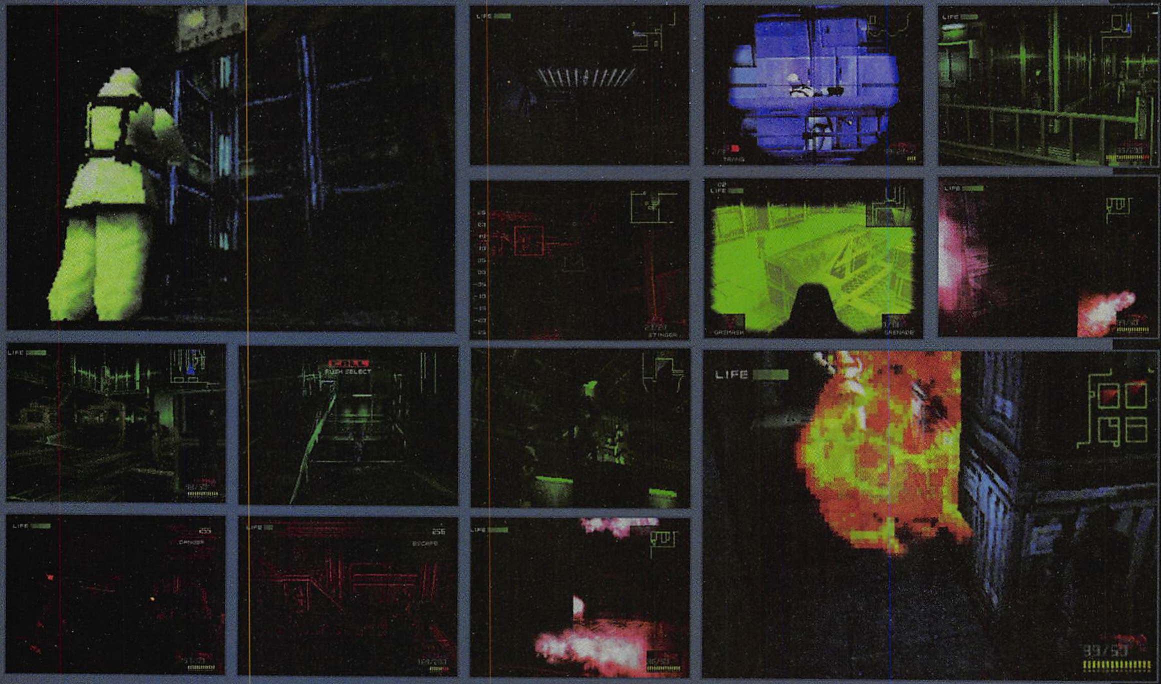
Japan Now:

Namco's booth was all about their latest arcade port. *Tekken 3* tournaments, *Tekken 3* give-aways, *Tekken 3* hot oil rubs (OK, that was just to make sure you were awake). What more really needs to be said about Namco... Well, there really isn't anything more to say about Namco, so there!



...Did I mention they had cars?

Gunner and a smattering of other titles here and there (we'll be covering those titles in the very near future). No Katana, no Project X and no really new and big surprises this time out. Heck, even the weird fruity Japanese stuff was in decline. In any event, while this show wasn't exactly a barn-burner, with E3 so close we're not losing much sleep over it. As for game of the show? Take a wild guess... (Hint: It's produced by the same company that brought you *Contra*).



Konami's Metal Gear Solid What's better than a video tape of Metal Gear Solid? ... I wonder??

Konami

What's better than a video tape of *Metal Gear Solid*? Playable *Metal Gear Solid*, of course! While we were only allowed a miniscule ten minutes of play time on this front-runner for PS game of the year, what we did see was stunning. It was nice to actually find out that the video tape we'd been drooling all over for almost a year was the actual game in action. Konami's sequel of sorts to their NES classic is going to set the world on fire. Check out these shots, and prepare for the *Metal Gear* onslaught that will follow E3.


...Look! Godzilla!

Wrap Up

Sadly, that's about all that really needs to be said about this spring's show. Sure, there were a few other stand-outs here and there: *Tail Concerto*, a couple of *Choro Q* games (well, those are for Reubus), Atlus' *Trap*

Japan Top Ten Best Selling

1. Final Fantasy V	Square	PlayStation
2. Mitsume Knight	Konami	PlayStation
3. Bushido Blade 2	Square	PlayStation
4. Gran Turismo	SCEJ	PlayStation
5. Bio-Hazard 2	Capcom	PlayStation
6. Metal Rod Heart Collection	Imagineer	PlayStation
7. Clock Tower Ghost Head	Ascii	PlayStation
8. Tenchu	Sony Music	PlayStation
9. Xenogears	Square	PlayStation
10. Dead or Alive	Tecmo	PlayStation

Japan Most Wanted

1. Dragon Quest	Enix	PlayStation
2. Sakura Taisen 2	Sega	Saturn
3. Pocket Monster Gold	Bandai	GameBoy
4. Super Robot Wars Final	Bandai	Saturn
5. Zelda: TOOT	Nintendo	N64

Top Three Most Wanted Imports and Top Ten Japan:

ECM



Pocket Fighter: SS
Raiden Fighter: SS
XI: PS

Dangohead



Rival Schools: PS
Castlevania SOTN: SS
Brave Fencer Musashiden: PS

Waka



Metal Gear Solid
Zelda: TOOT
Radiant Silvergun

GameFan's Fruit of the Month



From now on, we're going to take one game released in Japan each month and give it the esteemed title of "Fruit of the Month." What does this mean exactly? Well, what we're gonna do is pick one game that is just so out there, that there is absolutely no chance that it will ever come over here and with good reason. This month we take a quick peak at *Cooking Fighter* (any more of a look and you're likely to start acting like Bubba, and that's never a good thing). The premise here is to battle your way through numerous cooks, creating dishes from chickens and other hapless animals that you knock loopy with whacks from your sword (chickens haven't seen this much abuse since *Zelda: A Link to the Past*). Knock a chicken out cold, and turn him into any number of scrumptious Japanese cuisine. Oh, and don't forget to watch out for the other cook. Make dumplings, fried rice, noodles, the list goes on and on (sorry Dangohead, no dangos). It's not that the game is really terrible, it's just that you have to wonder exactly how something like this ever gets made. And wonder, and wonder, and wonder!





Pocket Fighter

ポケットファイター

















After the super-deformed antics of Capcom's *Puzzle Fighter*, many thought that it would be really cool if those characters starred in an actual fighting game. Capcom apparently thought the same thing, and here we have *Pocket Fighter*, straight from its recent arcade run. Originally designed to run under Capcom's CPS II hardware (the *Alpha* and *Marvel* games) they're on their way to Sony's PlayStation and Sega's Saturn console. Since the Saturn rev isn't ready for preview, we'll focus on the PS edition only with more to follow on both versions next month. Oh, and the limited number of characters and BGs in the shots has to do with the bare bones disc we received—rest assured they'll all be here next month.

Essentially, *Pocket Fighter* (*Gem Fighter* in the US) plays a lot like many other Capcom fighters (now that's a big surprise). Pick from an assortment of characters from the *Street Fighter*, *Vampire*, and even *Warzard* series of games, and take to the streets for some solid beat-'em-up action.

Among the additions to the typical *SF*-style engine, you can now pick up brightly colored gems littered about the playfield straight from *Puzzle Fighter*. What do these shiny little trinkets do? Well, by collecting them they enhance the strength of each of your main special moves. For instance, Morrigan's fire balls and dragon punch become more and more powerful depending on the number of gems you collect. By beating down on your opponent you can score more gems and leave them crying like little babies. As usual, you also have a super bar for some pretty nifty, character-crushing super attacks. Tabasa for instance (one of the *Warzard* characters), morphs into a large dragon and dishes out ugly amounts of damage. And that's only the beginning. The only gripe I have at this point with the gameplay is the lack of aerial raves from other recent Capcom fighters (this game screams for them, I tell ya!).

Beyond the gameplay, the visuals are terrific, with super-bright colors and relatively smooth animation (we'll get more into how the transition to the RAM-starved PS affects frame loss in the review). Let's just say that you probably won't be disappointed, but if you've played the arcade version extensively you might notice some differences.

Anyhow, that about wraps up this last-minute preview. Be back next month with the full scoop on this hot little number (hopefully along with the 4 Meg optional Saturn rev) and exactly how well it stacks up against other Capcom fighters.

ECM

















R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - CAPCOM	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



ECM
No Mercy? But they're so cute!

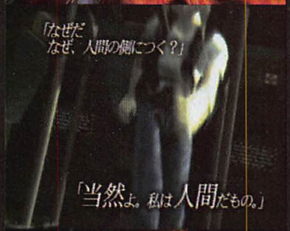




















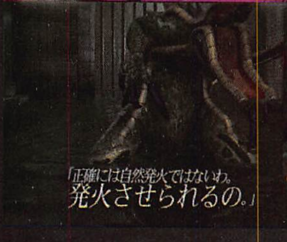


My favorite scene in RPG history used to be the opera scene in *Final Fantasy III* (*VI* in Japan). I remember when I first stood staring, mouth agape, at *FFVII* that I wished for that opera scene to get a 32-bit upgrade, but it simply wasn't there... until now.

Parasite Eve, Square's latest import RPG goliath looks ready to grab the competition by the head, put it in a head-lock, and give them noogies until *VIII* arrives. The game starts out with you controlling Aya Brea, an off-duty cop attending an opera in New York's Carnegie Hall. In the middle of the performance, Melissa Pearce, the opera star, hits high notes and people burst into flames. Melissa continues singing as audience members catch on fire and rush for the exit in a panicking mass of flaming death and humanity.

Stunning visuals filmed by a director with an eye for the dramatic—that's what the CG in this game is like. If you just washed your pantaloons, get ready to soil them again. The intro for Eve is so saliva-prone that they're issuing flood warnings. We just had to show you the intro, so view it and weep.

"CGs is nice and all, but how does it play?" The engine consists of polygon characters moving on pre-rendered backgrounds a la *FF7* or *RE2*. Locations and backgrounds are historically accurate, as former New Yorker ECM is quick











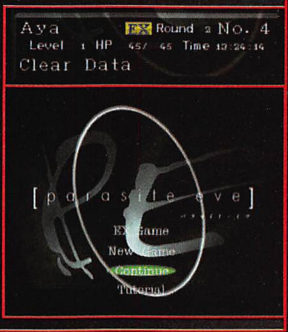






[exgame]

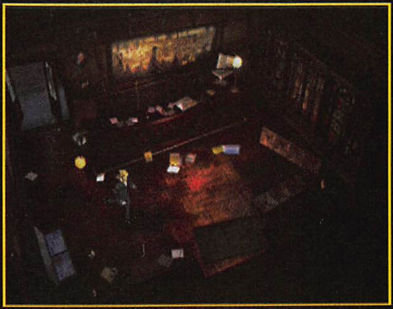
As we go to print, I've just finished the game. Just like in *Resident Evil 2*, after finishing the game the first time, a new game (titled EX) is saved on your memory card. When I went back and played the EX game, I noticed it was a lot harder (I ran out of bullets halfway through the second battle). Who knows what secrets await you after completing the EX version of the game? I can't wait...













to point out (though I've heard that the city map is way off). The game's realism doesn't stop at just backgrounds. You'll find weapons and armor which have real-life pictures in the instruction booklet including machine guns, handguns, shotguns, automatics, police vests, body armor, jackets, and body suits.

Combat in the game is both real-time and turn-based. You have control of your character's movement at all times during a battle scene and spend most of your time running around dodging enemies/attacks or hiding around corners waiting for your attack meter to fill up. When it does, you can choose from the usual options: attack, use an item, or cast magic (using Parasite Energy). The magic spells in *PE* are your basic *Final Fantasy* spells: Scan, Slow, Antidote, etc.

And in case you were wondering, the music is good. The intro is guitar riff-ridden and driving, while most of the music in the game is mood-settingly creepy. The foley sounds and Dolby Surround flesh out the total sound experience as well.

The control is analog, allowing you to finesse your way through enemy attacks in fights. Though it's advertised as Dual Shock compatible, the game does not shake... which is a pity.

While I love *Parasite Eve*, I must admit that there are flaws in the game. The lack of a convenient magic storage box (like *Resident Evil*) leads to the wasteful discard of items because your inventory is always filled to capacity. Another imperfection is the slow "running" speed. Although I liked what they did with the "purposely sluggish" walking speed you start the game with (Aya attends the opera wearing an evening gown and high heels). After you're given the chance to change outfits, you move faster, but that speed is still a bit too slow (gotta get to that next CG faster!). Don't let these little blemishes dissuade you from looking into this title further, because it is the only cinematic RPG out there, and it looks incredible.

There's no official release date yet for an American version, but you can bet it's coming. We'll keep you informed of the latest as we hear it. The countdown begins now... *E*



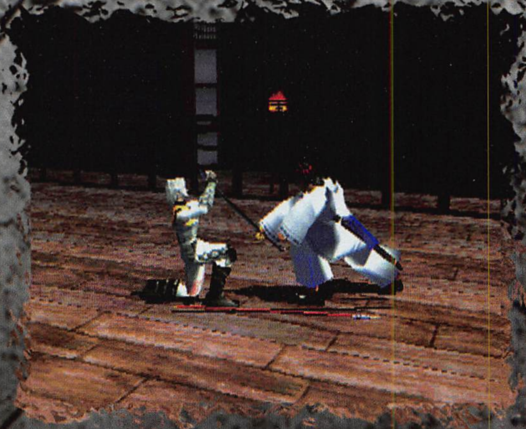
R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - SQUARE	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - AVERAGE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

EGGO "THE" Cinematic RPG... I like the sound of that.

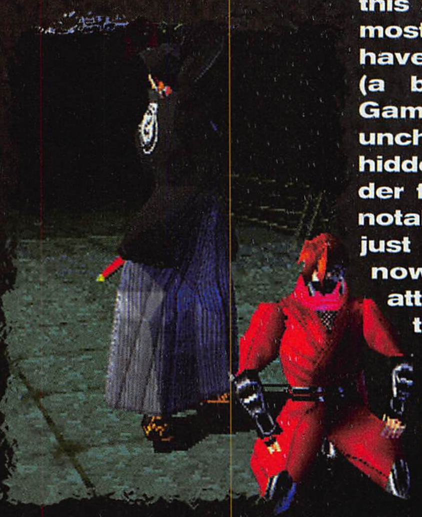


BUSHIDOBLADE 2









Bushido Blade was definitely an innovation in the super-saturated fighting genre. With one hit kills, huge arenas, parrying instead of blocking, and a code of honor, *Bushido Blade* may have been a bit too different for most fighting fanatics. I liked the first *BB* (the few, the proud) and was wringing my hands in anticipation of the sequel, *Bushido Blade 2*. While the whole spirit and tradition of the original is present in the second incarnation of Light Weight's samurai slash-a-thon, it's also somewhat of a let down to only see small marginal improvements rather than major innovations.

Six warriors comprise the cast of characters you may choose to fight with, though in story mode you can obtain an additional 12 supporting characters for a total of 18. While this sounds quite excellent at first, most of the supporting characters have either similar or exact moves (a bit of the *MK* bug, I see). Gameplay has remained mostly unchanged (yes, the dirt throwing, hidden weapon hurling, and surrender features are still in) with three notable exceptions: In the place of just one attack button there are now vertical and horizontal attacks both of which are important to master—especially if you wish to parry. Gone is the parry button, in exchange for a more realistic technique. If you wish to parry an opponent's attack, you must meet that attack with an assault of your own. This takes copious amounts of trial and error, and the patience of a samurai to master.

Graphically, *Bushido Blade* improves on the first... barely. All the characters have been retouched and look a lot cleaner, but the backgrounds still suffer from severe clipping and pop-up (I think 'chunk-up' would be more accurate). Moreover, the size of the battlefields has been reduced, probably to remedy the loading issues from the original, where it had to pause and load the BGs in segments. Alas, I was a big fan of those monstrously large levels from the original and instead I got a dozen or so measly, mostly flat arenas. Gone are the raindrops and snowflakes, though there are interactive backgrounds (i.e. running through a bamboo forest slashing trees). Music is about the same: Hard Japanese metal mixed in with some Feudal Age tones, giving a unique and strange sound. Sound effects are well done, such as the ringing of swords and the difference in terrain as you run (from grass to stone) can be audibly, uh, audible.

Bushido Blade 2 will only satisfy the most hard-core *Bushido Blade* player, and even then it might not be enough. Because of the drop in overall graphic quality, playing it a bit before buying wouldn't hurt. Bear in mind that *Bushido Blade* didn't do too well in the US, so expect a wee bit of the ol' *Tobal 2* curse. If more *Bushido Blade* is what you clamor for, well, here ya go. But if you're looking for a noticeable upgrade from the original, be prepared to perform seppuku.

完

R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - LIGHTWEIGHT
PUBLISHER - SQUARE
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



DANGOHEAD
It slices, it dices, but it still needs sharpening...

NECTARIS

The most nostalgic game of them all has returned...

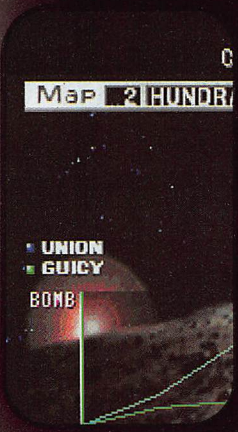




It would take a pretty strong argument to convince you that *Nectaris* is a worthwhile buy, being that it is an import and has little new to offer. A cross between *Military Madness* (actually, it's sort of a sequel to that TG-16 classic) and *Iron Storm*, *Nectaris* is your basic hexagonal strategy title with 3D battle scenes that you can watch, but not control.



Instead of something trite, like *Axis vs. Allies*, *Nectaris* sprinkles a little originality into the tired storyline, pitting two warring states, on a barren wasteland, against each other. To start with, you have only a couple of different types of units to command: tanks and mechs. Using defensive tactics, you can easily move from one level to the next, gaining access to heavier weaponry and more complex scenario objectives.





The graphics of *Nectaris* are utilitarian. Small icons represent the units and bases are no more than colored squares. The only break in the monotony are the battle simulations. These are quite entertaining to watch, at first. But, the camera AI isn't smart enough to offer a wide variety of viewing angles and you will find yourself, after a handful of missions, turning the animation off.





One might think that I wasn't very impressed with *Nectaris*. They'd be right. It offers nothing that hasn't already been seen in a dozen games, including the two aforementioned titles. However, this does not mean that *Nectaris* isn't an enjoyable play. If you are a fan of the genre, like I, you will nonetheless find a great deal of gaming pleasure crammed into this familiar package.







If you crave the nostalgic buzz you get from playing these old strategy titles, *Nectaris* is right up your alley. If you are anyone else, though, best spend your money elsewhere. *EN*



Control your platoon and check out your stats! All reminiscent of the old school version!

R REVIEW — PlayStation

DEVELOPER - HUDSON	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - HUDSON SOFT	DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



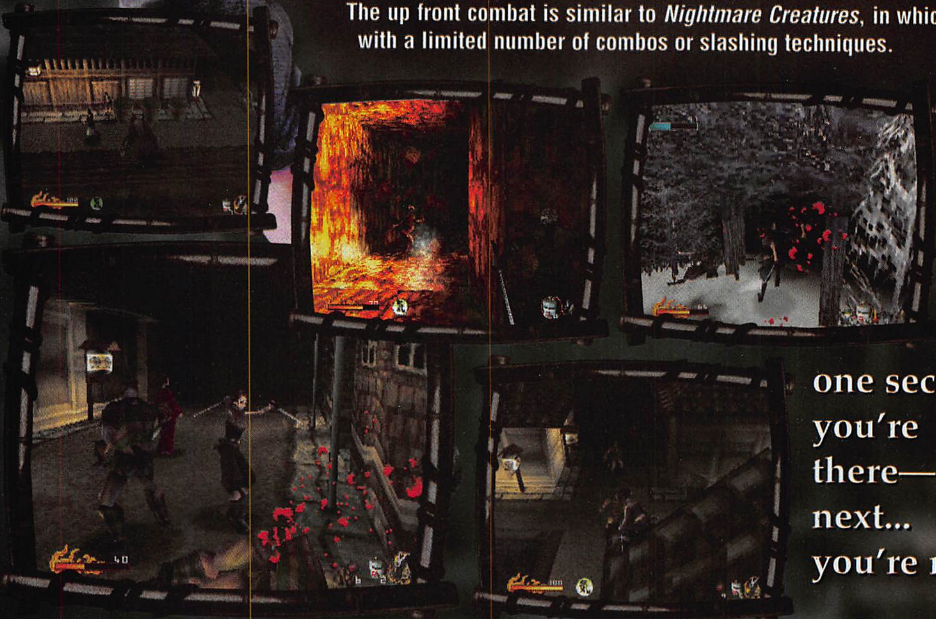
EL NINO
"Listen to that catchy music..."

Tenchu

"Nanda!" the cry rings out through the night—"What the-?!" Looking beyond him, you see a dark shape, low to the ground, speeding in your direction… guard dogs too? But you're already reaching for your belt, freeing the smoke bomb without thinking. A flick of your wrist <poof> and one second you're there—the next… you're not. As the smoke clears, nobody notices you pull yourself to a nearby rooftop with some help from your grappling hook. From your lofty perch, you look down silently at the bewildered guard and his dog. After a few moments of frantic searching, they give up and return to their normal routine. You continue your journey, jumping from rooftop to rooftop. The ground appears too dangerous. But your reverie is broken by a female shout from a nearby rooftop "Itazo!" "There he is!" Too bad for her, there's nobody else around. Brandishing your sword, you stand at the ready position. The female ninja is already coming at you, twirling her sais in anticipation…

Sound like fun? This is *Tenchu*, an import from Sony Music Entertainment. Running on an engine similar to *Tomb Raider*, this game could be the start of a new genre in video games—the "Sneaky Guy" genre: hiding in shadows, running past guards when their backs are turned, and killing them when they're not looking.

If you're seen, you can always elect to fight it out hand to hand, or rather sword to sword. The up front combat is similar to *Nightmare Creatures*, in which you can block or attack with a limited number of combos or slashing techniques.



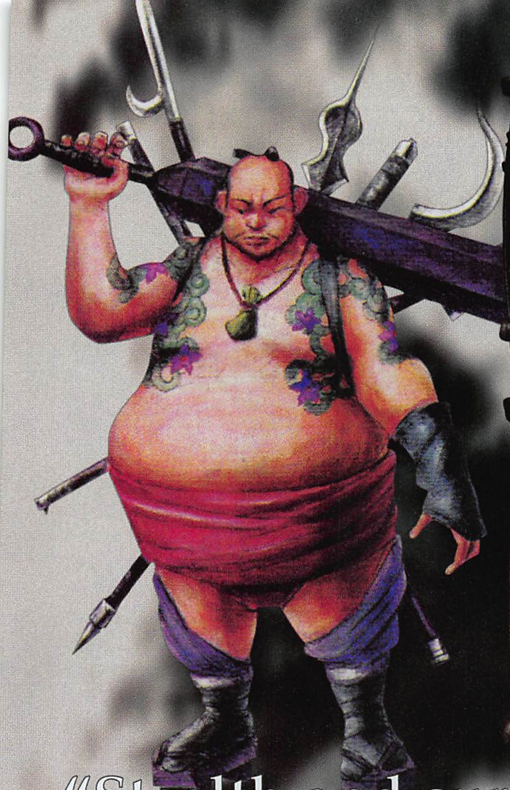
"A flick of your wrist <poof> and one second you're there—the next… you're not."

REVIEW — PlayStation

- DEVELOPER - ACQUIRE
- PUBLISHER - SONY MUSIC ENT.
- FORMAT - CD
- # OF PLAYERS - 1
- DIFFICULTY - AVG./MED.
- AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



EGGO
"Black is the night, fast as the wind, the Shinobi are not seen!"









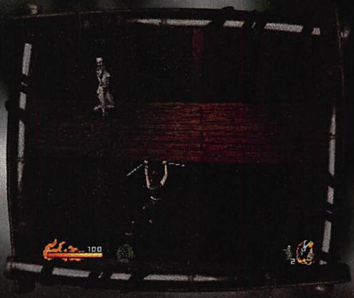
"The voice acting for Rekkamaru, the male ninja, is done by ninja legend Sho Kosugi."



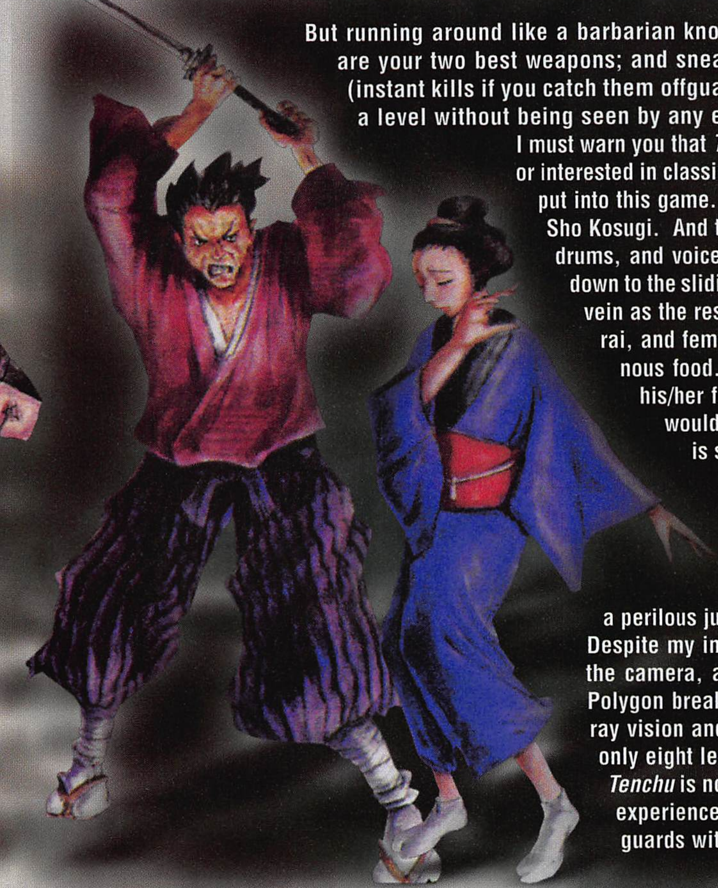
"Stealth and surprise are your two best weapons..."











But running around like a barbarian knocking down doors is not the way of the ninja. Stealth and surprise are your two best weapons; and sneaking up on enemies is rewarded with broken necks and slit throats (instant kills if you catch them offguard). Also, you're given secret weapons/scrolls if you're able to pass a level without being seen by any enemies.

I must warn you that *Tenchu* won't be for everyone. Only those heavily into the ninja experience or interested in classic Asian culture will fully appreciate all the elements the programmers have put into this game. The voice acting for Rekkamaru, the male ninja, is done by ninja legend Sho Kosugi. And the music is a modernized shakuhachi, a kabuki-like mix of flutes, strings, drums, and voices—just masterful. Even a building's architecture is historically accurate down to the sliding, paper doors. Enemies and weapons are varied and molded in the same vein as the rest of the game, set in feudal Japan. Enemies include firebreathers, samurai, and female ninja. Weapons range from shuriken to exploding bombs, and poisonous food. There are countless little touches which the casual gamer will miss in his/her first time through the game. If you miss a target with your shuriken, what would you normally do? Why, go over there and pick it up, of course. An archer is shooting arrows at you from long distance? The ninja thing to do is shatter the arrow in mid-flight with your sword. Little touches like this amount to a captivating, completely ninja experience.

To top it all off, *Tenchu* is dual shock compatible. The analog control is no better than the pad (you're not allowed to take smaller steps or walk), but the shaking of the controller in your hands when you land from a perilous jump or cut a person's throat brings a wicked smile to your face.

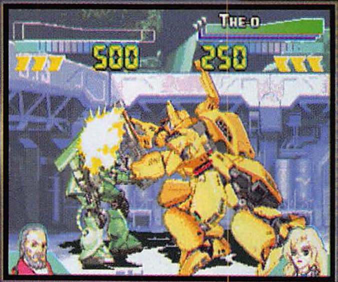
Despite my infatuation with the game, there are flaws in it. You have no control over the camera, and occasionally suffer through bouts of not being able to see yourself. Polygon breakup is also a problem, providing you with an unfair advantage—ninja X-ray vision and the ability to see through walls from time to time. Lastly, the game is only eight levels long, making it possible to finish the game in one sitting. However, *Tenchu* is not about finishing the game and putting it away. Those that appreciate the experience will keep going back, trying to find all the hidden weapons and kill the guards without being seen. ***E***

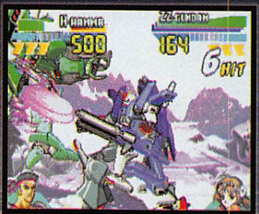
GUNDAM THE BATTLE MASTER 2

GUNDAM

ガンダム・ザ・バトルマスター









If there is a Japanese anime series that has been poorly represented in the video game industry (well, aside from *Macross*), it has been *Gundam*. You would think an anime that mixes both lumbering metal machines that move with the fluidity of humans and traditional melee weaponry along with a pretty damn good storyline would generate at least a handful of good games. Sadly, all *Gundam*-themed games that have been made have been pretty... well, crappy. And no, I'm not counting the *Robot War* series, since it doesn't exclusively feature *Gundam* robots.

In any case, a resounding thud greeted me the other day as the ever-bright-and-happy ECM (that's sarcasm ppls) was on his daily routine of passing out games to review. As I saw the first one on my desk, *Gundam: The Battle Master 2*, I wondered if I did anything to ECM last week, and if I didn't, why I deserved to suffer a *Gundam* game that was projected to suck. Well, for once, the dire fate of a *Gundam* game has taken a turn for the better, as *Battle Master 2* is an interesting fighting romp featuring everybody's favorite multi-ton terrors.

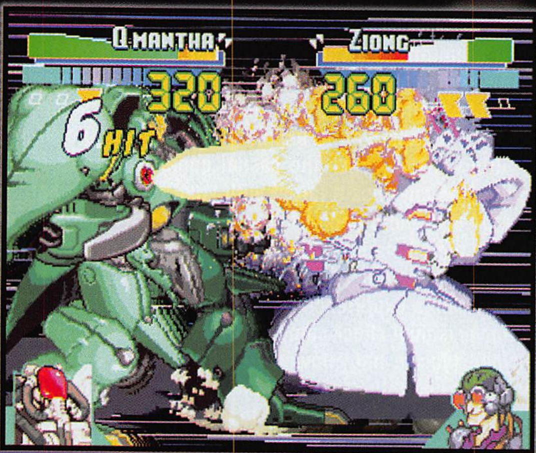
Much like the original, *Gundam: The Battle Master 2* features many of the *Gundam* robots, plus a few this reviewer has never seen in the *Gundam* anime (though, I admit, I've been kind of out of the *Gundam* anime loop). Though it could be called a 2D fighter in the simplest sense, the *Gundam* characters are animated in quite a unique way. Groups of sprites that make up an arm or leg are individually animated. All limbs of the robots move freely from other individual parts, yet are still joined together. Pretty cool stuff... (I wonder if Treasure gets royalties for that stuff).

Each of the 12 robots has two punch and kick attacks, and the special moves for each character are pretty standard *Street Fighter* issue. All robots can thrust up and across, though it seems unnecessary for the small arenas you fight in. Combat comes with standard pull back blocking, a unique evade feature (Ed's note: Not counting the *KoF* games, right?), and even multi-hitting supers. The gameplay is a bit slow, but with two large robots (especially the boss characters...we're talking HUGE here) railing on each other, I guess that can be expected.

"Mmmm, multi-jointed sprites... GUNDAMN, it's good!"







Sound effects are on the dot, with anime-like clunky metal clinks and clangs, as well as laser blast sounds straight outta any standard anime. What has to go is the music... I'd expect some cheesy Japanese glory fight song, but what's here are some really bad tunes that were unearthed from the 16-bit graveyard. In a word... bleah.

The verdict is it's a decent fighting game with *Gundam* characters. If you've been waiting for a good *Gundam* video game and you're a hardcore *Gundam* fanatic, this might be your ticket to mech-madness. Otherwise, it's a nice little weekender... nothing like letting off a little steam by jumping into your *Gundam* machine and kicking some multi-jointed ass!



R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - BANDAI
PUBLISHER - BANDAI
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



DANGOHEAD
Mmmmmm...
multi-jointed sprites!

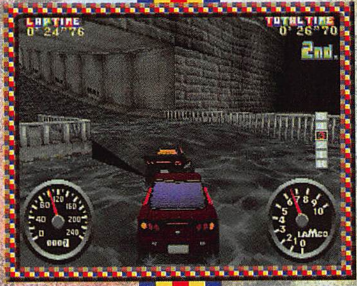


CHORO Q3











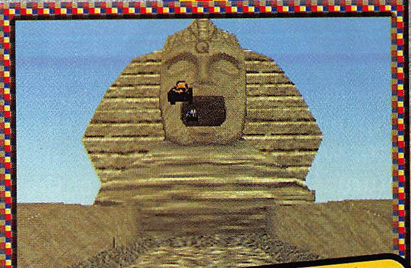


Believe it or not, *Choro Q* is on its third installment on the PlayStation. *Choro Q3* is now out in Japan, and, like its two predecessors, will not (as far as we know) be released in this country. Well, to be honest, I can see why. This game just probably won't appeal to a broad audience. But I still love it. I played the heck out of the first two, and am well on my way with the third.

In *Choro Q3*, as in *Choro Q2*, you must find and/or earn access to the parts shops, body shops, etc. located in a small city that you drive through. Where this differs from *CQ2*, though, is this: After you've beaten the world circuit once, you can then choose to visit the town at night, when the other half opens up (but certain parts close during the night). And figuring out how to obtain all 100 coins, which give you access to all of the "extras," is not easy, and after 4 or 5 days of heavy play, I've gotten only 80 of 'em.

Choro Q3 is more of a "toy" racing game. And by that I mean it's not much of a sim, and it's not very difficult. Once you get your car souped up, from the wide variety of upgrades, even those tracks you thought you'd never beat are easily dealt with. And the music sounds kind of cartoonish, too. But for some reason, when it all comes together, it's a fun game. There's just something about zipping around a track in a super-deformed Viper that appeals to the kid in me. Now don't get me wrong: This is not a great game. There's quite a bit of polygonal breakup (seams) in the game, and powersliding is way too easy. But, when you play as many racing games as I do, *Choro Q3* is nice diversion; sort of a mindless bit of fun between the more serious rounds of *Gran Turismo*, *Formula One*, and *Rally Cross* (Where's *Rally Cross 2*, Sony?). It's fun, but in a kind of silly way. I guess I just haven't grown up yet. **R**





Out of the Sphinx and...



...into the pool??!?!

R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TAMSOFT	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - TAKARA	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



REUBUS
Super-deformed cars? They're gr-rr-r-rr-reat!






G-DARIUS

Up until very recently, Sony's poly-pusher was not the place to be if you were into shooters of the fun variety. My nightmares are still filled with the likes of *Two-Tenkaku*, *Stahfelder*, and *Air Grave*—shooters that give new meaning to the concept of how bad a blast-'em-up can be. *RayStorm* allayed my fears, somewhat, and proved that the system was capable of a pretty decent shooter and *Einhander* knocked my hat off in the visuals department. However, up until now, there hasn't been a blaster that has been able to get the graphics and gameplay to meet somewhere in the middle. Which is why, with great excitement, I present Taito's *G-Darius*, the latest in the venerable and prolific shooter series.







Spanning everything from the arcade (the original *Darius* was phenomenal with its extra-wide presentation) to, more recently, a number of different titles on Sega's Saturn; the official mascot of the shooter genre for this generation of hardware. And therein lies the good news: *G-Darius* is the first PS shooter to *really* compare favorably with the better Saturn shooters out there, gameplay-wise. And while it's generally unfair to compare games across platforms, in this case it's justified (at least in my narrow view) as generally PS shooters are BAD (can't wait for the hate mail on this one).



As is standard issue in the *Darius* series of shooters, you take the helm of the Silver Hawk attack fighter and battle, nay, obliterate legion after legion






R REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TAITO

PUBLISHER - TAITO

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



ECM
Filet of Eclipse Eye, please.







of mechanical fish, apparently bent on the destruction of the human race. Why? Maybe the fish of the universe finally grew weary of being served up to people in cans and the like (probably not big fans of fishing nets, either). To be honest, the story isn't exactly important (when is it, in a shooter?) so let's move on to how it plays.

Gameplay is classic *Darius* all the way through. Destroy various brightly-colored craft that are set apart from the more subdued coloring of 'regular' enemies to power-up guns, missiles, shields and the like. After enough hulking-up you'll have a ship bristling with so much firepower it would make the spacecraft in *The Last Starfighter* green with envy (how's that for dating myself). And as usual, you make your way across a map of squares, choosing among different levels as you go through, effectively increasing replayability immensely; travel from Alpha zone to Omega Zone, and everywhere in between. As well, when a boss approaches, on top of all this, your ship doesn't behave likes it's constructed from tissue paper, as the control conveys the feeling of weight and bulk (thankfully, though, it doesn't feature that annoying centering-type mechanism of *RayStorm*). And instead of having straight-forward bombs of the nuke-'em-all variety as in every other *Darius*, *GD* features a unique method of collecting bombs by grabbing enemies with 'capture balls' and then using them as frontal shields (a la *Gradius*), option ships, or grab 'em and detonate them as smart bombs. Nice to see that there are still some semi-original ideas out there.



Before *GD* made its PS debut, it was a System-11 type game available in Japanese arcades and the rare US arcades (thank you Pak Mann!). Essentially a PlayStation in an arcade cabinet, minus the CD drive, *GD* was a very intense game graphically. While all the shooting obviously takes place in a 2D plane, the spectacle observable in the polygonal backgrounds and enemies elicits memories of the incredible space battles in Game Arts' Sega-CD classic, *Silpheed*(wow, Sega-CD and classic in the same sentence—didn't expect that did ya'?). Huge fleets of ships are destroyed, monstrous winged dinos wheel through the sky, and all manner of polygonal panache are rife in this game. Generally, I prefer 'plain old' hand-drawn sprites to chunky polys, but when it comes off this well, it's hard not to be really impressed. Oh, and lest I forget, some of the most fantastic boss shooting scenes ever call this game home. Queen Fossil makes the stage 3 ship from *R-Type* look like a Matchbox car (actually, more like a Micro Machine).



Musically, it's Zuntata all the way. The typically quirky music of Taito's sound team are here in all their stereo glory. And while Zuntata's music isn't for everyone, it's certainly a nice break from screaming, '80s-style guitar riffs, or the standard techno soundtrack found in just about every other shooter out there.



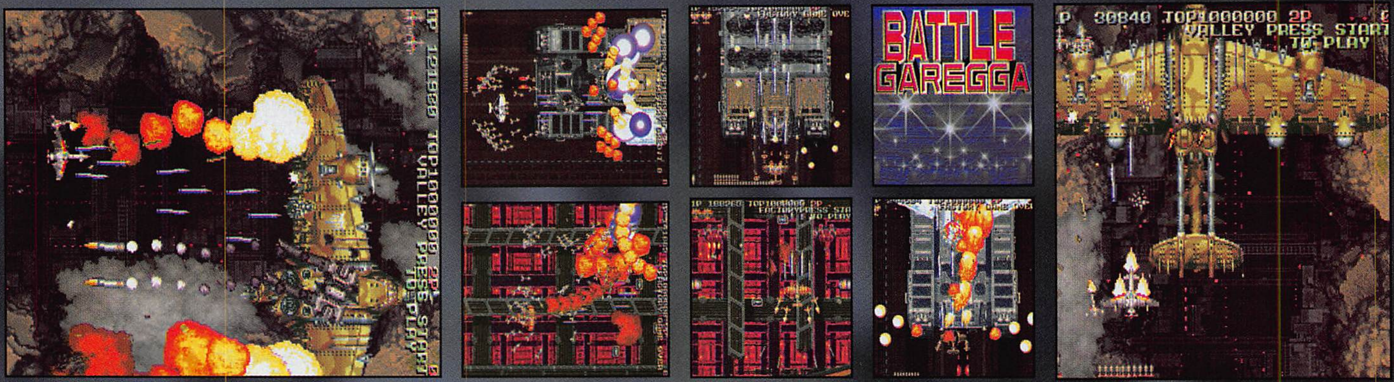
Negatives? Only one, really. Like Taito's previous PS shooting effort, *RayStorm*, the game suffers from some nasty slowdown at points. And like *RayStorm*, it's not always the gradual slow-down-and-speed-up-type frame drop. It's more along the lines of you're cruising along at a solid 30 when the game will slow to about 10 and speed back up to 30 in the space of about 3 seconds. You'll be whizzing along delivering death when all of a sudden, <BAM!>, slowdown and speedup city— time to start collecting power-ups again. Not enough to ruin the game, but an annoyance nonetheless.

Anyhow, that about says it all for *G-Darius*. Taito strikes again with a rousing blast-'em-up, and proves that, on occasion, the PS is perfectly capable of generating a shooter to rank with the best of 'em. Cross your fingers and hope that Working Designs finds this one worthy of a US release (or someone else, perhaps) and if not, go import! —ECM









Proving yet again that companies that make nothing other than shooters (Psikyo, Seibu Kaihatsu) can make gobs of cash, Raizing strikes with its latest Saturn release, *Battle Garegga* (OK, so they also did *Bloody Roar* and Psikyo has one fighter... but that's all!). These are the same guys responsible for last year's big import hit, *Soukyu Gurentai* (it also saw a belated release on the PlayStation from Data East), a vertically scrolling, pre-rendered blast-fest from EA (yes, that EA) which was pretty intense, to say the least. How does the "arcade shooter of '96" stack up in comparison? In a word: Fantastically!

Battle Garegga is a vertically scrolling shooter (the preferred shooter format, IMHO) that resembles the old Genesis shooter *Steel Empire* by Flying Edge (the short-lived Acclaim Genesis imprint). Take to the skies in any of four vintage-style aircraft, engaging in various missions across five levels. In the past, the *Raiden* series of shooters has probably been the best examples of shrapnel-filled shooter craziness: there are so many sprites floating around the screens of those shooters that they required the agility of Jackie Chan and the eyes of an eagle to sort all the debris from the bullets. *Garegga* continues that fine tradition with bullets that resemble the shrapnel to such a degree that, initially, you're hard-pressed to distinguish what's safe to fly through and what's, well, not. A good rule of thumb is to avoid anything the size of a pixel or two and shoot everything bigger than that–sounds like typical shooter gameplay, but you really need to take it seriously in this one.

Gameplay is straight out of the Seibu Kaihatsu school of shooter design. Blast through level after level of manic, vertically scrolling action, powering up your main gun to prodigious proportions. Lay waste to all that oppose you, and partake of a clever addition to the 'bomb' category of shooter weaponry. Instead of having access to one all-annihilating blast, you can pick up bullet icons strewn throughout the playfield from destroyed enemies which extend the duration of the special weapon.

That about sums it up. Yet another notch in the Saturn's shooter belt. Lets hope that Raizing keeps it up and doesn't follow Psikyo's example and do a Model 2 shooter like *Zero Gunner* (looks great, but plays....echhh). ***ECM***



R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - RAIZING	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - EA JAPAN	DIFFICULTY - DJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



ECM
Bullets, debris... bullets, debris... <BOOM>... bullets.

A number of years back, Capcom released a hot little arcade game by the name of *Wonder 3* in the US and Japan. Driven by Capcom's hot hardware at the time (CPS 1, to be exact), *3 Wonders* combined three games onto one arcade board. An action platformer, a side-scrolling shooter, and a puzzle game. This game made its debut at a time when Capcom was still doing games other than *Street Fighter* derivatives <sigh> (where's my arcade perfect *Strider*?!). How well do they stack up on the recently-released Saturn version? Let's have a look at Xing's latest licensed property:

W3
WONDER 3
3 GAMES IN 1

Chariot

Chariot is the continuation of *Rooster*, after you've beaten that game and obtained the chariot. This one is a side-scrolling shooter with numerous power-ups and solid blaster gameplay. Clean, colorful graphics—but afflicted by the same malady as *Rooster*: not enough animation. Again, all the play made it over, they just forgot a pile of animation...





Roosters

Take the role of one of two adventurers on a quest to mangle a hoard of demons and obtain a flying chariot in the first part of *3 Wonders*. Run around grabbing power-ups and heart cards, while blasting anything that stands in your way in this *Contra*-esque trip. This one is two-player simultaneous and was scads of fun in its initial arcade incarnation. However, it didn't quite make a flawless transition to Saturn. Specifically, it has lost a pretty decent number of animation frames which gives everything a stiff, framey feel. Not that the gameplay isn't exact, it's just that at this point games like this should be making flawless moves to 32-bit consoles—especially one as 'sprite-friendly' as Sega's Saturn. BTW, Lou, one of the characters in this game, is a sub-character in *Marvel vs. Capcom*.





Don't Pull!

The final game in the *Wonder 3* melange, *Don't Pull* is a puzzler in the spirit of the classic NES game, *Adventures of LoLo*. Push blocks to smash enemies and collect power-ups (again). This one has no tie to the previous two games, and always seemed (to me at least) to be more of an after-thought to round out the package. An OK addition, just don't expect to play it too often.

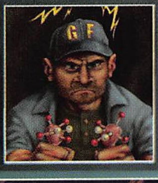




That about sums it up. A great arcade game gets a halfway decent port to Sega's sprite-muncher (if only the RAM cart had been an option!). Alas, it isn't perfect and I'm certainly not going to tell you to run out and get this one, simply because the graphics didn't really make the full trip (I know, I know, gameplay is more important, but...). Still, if you want a crack at some solid, 'old school' Capcom gameplay, this is the only ticket in town till Capcom gets the lead out and does a Sega Ages/Namco Museum type game-soon Capcom, make it soon!!!

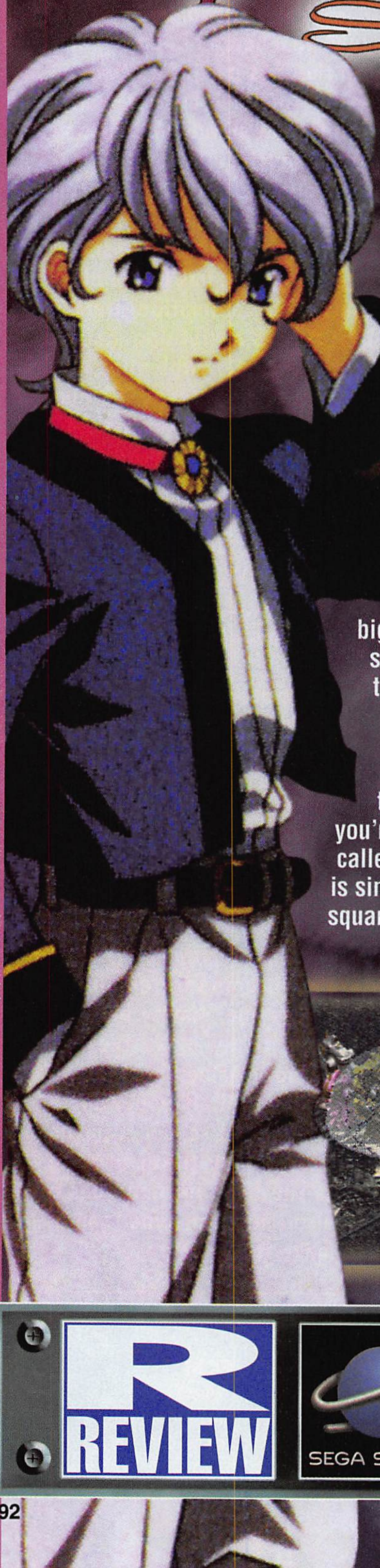
R REVIEW | PlayStation

DEVELOPER - XING	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - XING	DIFFICULTY - EASY
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



ECM
"Where's the RAM cart when you need it?"

サクラ大戦2 Sakura Wars



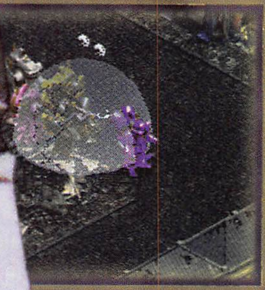
There are some import games which are playable by American gamers who don't know a word of Japanese (*Parasite Eve*). Then there are imports which are easier to complete with knowledge of Katakana (*FF7*), but the "not-knowing-a-word-of-Japanese" gamer can fumble through eventually. And finally, there's *Sakura Wars*. You can lump *Toki Meki* in here as well—the "You have to be Japanese to play" category. I'm not saying that a non-Japanese gamer can't finish the game... but he/she would have some trouble getting solid play value out of it.

The main attraction of *Sakura Wars*, a best seller in the land of the Rising Sun, isn't jaw-plummeting graphics, hand-to-the-eye lightsourcing, or 3D environments. Nope, the basic "thrill" *SW* provides is the female interaction. Take a single, young male and put him in an environment with eight beautiful look-at-me-"I'm-so-cute" women, and you have yourself a game. One of the first big-name "dating sims" was *Toki Meki.*, which has spawned countless versions. But *Sakura Wars* takes the dating sim and combines it with mech fighting (what more could your male gamer want?). (Ed's Note: Well, the male Japanese gamer anyway).

In a nutshell, *S. Wars* has you walk around and talk to your many female companions. Every so often, you're interrupted from your socializing by a klaxon and called into combat with those same women. The fighting is similar to *Final Fantasy Tactics* (turn-based, movement squares on a grid, large parties, etc.), but all your charac-











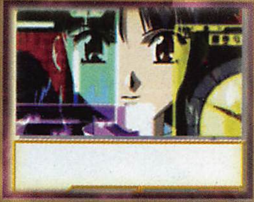
R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

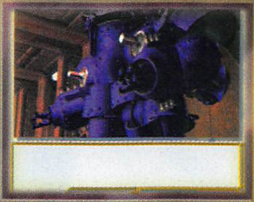
DEVELOPER - RED	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SEGA JAPAN	DIFFICULTY - HARD
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

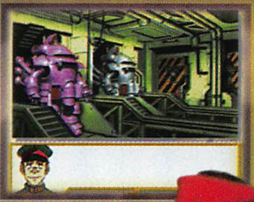


EGGO
Nihongo o yomemaska? If not, forget it.















'NUFF TEXT?

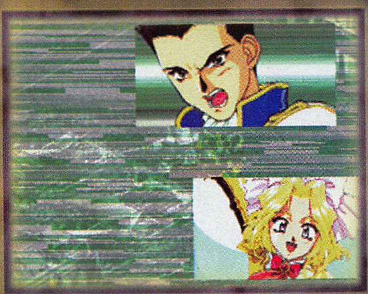




ters are in mechs. And when your character performs a special move/magic, there's a brief cut scene showing her call out the name of the move in dramatic fashion (and they'll spell out the name of the attack in the background).

Getting back to my main point, the combat isn't what's going to make you buy this game. It's the interaction with the eight young women. As you talk to them, you'll have to pick from different choices; and since the decisions are time-based, you'd better be fluent in Japanese AND a quick reader (no time to fumble through a Kanji dictionary in case you were wondering). If you're too slow to respond, you'll probably receive an angry glare and lose a little face in front of that particular female.





If you aren't fluent in Japanese, please stay away from this game. You can pass it without knowing what's going on, but the game is heavily text intensive, and the person-to-person interaction is the main selling point of the game. Skipping the female interaction for the mechs is simply not worth it. There are better mech sims and strategy sims out there. And as for dating sims... well, get out of the house, already! *E*

















Phantasy Star™ Collection



Phat *PS* Art!!!











The disk contains all four *PS* titles to date, and also treats gamers to a ton of cool extras. The disk loads up with a commercial for each title, then offers you a choice of selecting a game or the image gallery—which is really smooth. The gallery contains over 200 images from the series. Stills, sketches, in-game art and more are packed in and are a real boon to any *Phantasy Star* fan.

You know, there are a lot of people who are more than willing to see the ol' Sega Saturn take a long walk off the ever-so-short pier of the jaded gamer. Granted, it could have done a lot more for American gamers, and went wrong in a few key areas that Sony and Nintendo had a little less trouble getting right. But at the same time, the loss of the Saturn means more than losing some killer arcade ports that we have all come to know and love, it means losing some key franchises whose most recent offerings will never reach our shores.

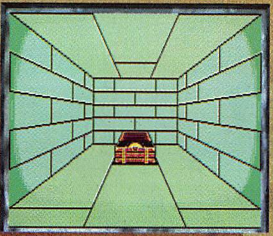
One of the biggest losses in this gamer's mind is a series that never truly got its due via a 32-bit sequel, Sega's epic line of *Phantasy Star* RPGs. Well, the gang at SOJ know what's up, and after some serious whining on my part, I managed to pry the recently released *Phantasy Star Collection* out of ECM's hands for a glorious stroll down memory lane. And what a trip it was.



For gamers that actually had a clue back in the day, a certain plumber could have actually been fixing pipes, and the avid Sega freak wouldn't have know the difference. The SMS (that's the Sega Master System for all you young'uns out there) released a title that would change the way I looked at games. It wasn't about smashing things with your butt, or blasting them with phasers till nothing moved. It was about a group of individuals that came together to stick it to the man. The original *Phantasy Star* became my base for the Nintendo vs. Sega argument that would inevitably start in the school yard on a daily basis. After my friends got "oohed" and "aaahed" by this glorious tale of magic, technology, and adventure brought to life by the whopping 8-bit monster that was the SMS, they were all believers. The release of the sequels on the Genesis did nothing but solidify that argument, continuing the legacy of one of the best RPG series of all time into the 16-bit era.

Of course, we all expected to see the saga continue on the Saturn, but any hopes American gamers had of this stellar RPG ever continuing fizzled some time ago. SOJ does not play when it comes to hooking up its fans, however, and while they may not have produced a sequel, Japanese gamers have been treated to one of the greatest collections

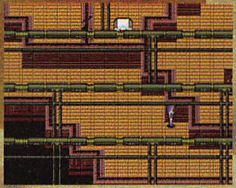
Phantasy Star



Phantasy Star 2



Phantasy Star 3






ever assembled on one shiny round disc of gaming joy, the *Phantasy Star Collection*. All four classic games have been pulled together for an RPG super reunion, and it kicks some serious tail. But then again, how could it not?

> "...The *Phantasy Star Collection* is easily one of the greatest compilations of all time..."

Although they're not exactly the technological wonders they once were, the games themselves are exact ports (though the original now features a tweaked stereo soundtrack, which is pretty friggin' cool). Everything is in place, and I was surprised how close everything was to the American translations. Theses four RPG classics are just as engrossing as they were when I was kickin' it in elementary and middle school. *Phantasy Star* with its moving storyline; *PSII*, the killer 16-bit sequel with those insanely complex dungeons; *PSIII*, a graphically more impressive title that was somewhat of a letdown in comparison to previous efforts; and *PSIV*, the game that turned the series around. I actually still remember where secret items were hidden, and where the weapon shops, dungeons, and churches were located. Despite the translation difficulties, I still managed to have a lot of fun reliving this little piece of gaming history.



After hours of play, I can definitely say that the Saturn will be missed in the U.S. The *Phantasy Star Collection* is easily one of the greatest compilations of all time. Square may have stolen the show with the release of *Final Fantasy VII* on the PlayStation this year, but the real crime was a lack of a 32-bit sequel to this excellent series. Until the day when we are blessed with such a title (I have heard rumblings of a Katana sequel—oh, how the mouth waters), this collection is a more-than-adequate substitute, and if you're big into the import scene, it's a must-buy. Period. ***B***

Phantasy Star 4







R REVIEW | SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA OF JAPAN	# OF PLAYERS - 1
PUBLISHER - SEGA OF JAPAN	DIFFICULTY - HARD
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



BUBBA
That's 'phattie' with a ph.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS '97







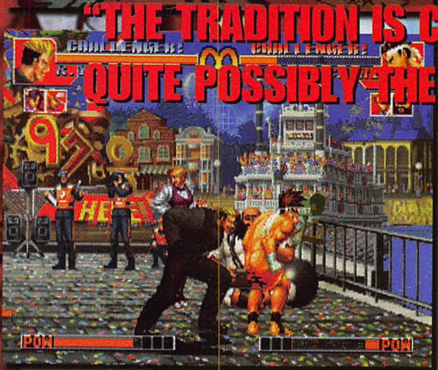




I've finally come to the realization that King of Fighters is indeed SNK's biggest and best fighting game series, even beyond the Samurai Shodown games (though SS2 still stands as their best self-standing fighter). The tradition is continued with this year's version: KOF'97, quite possibly the best title in the series to date. This year, the KOF tournament is sponsored by a variety of big businesses and enterprises, and the atmosphere is more of a high-profile contest, with worldwide broacasting, commentators and organizers, and television cameras everywhere. But something dark and mysterious continues to loom just under the surface, some ancient evil connected to three new contestants: Chris, Shermie, and Yashiro.



Many say that this is the best-playing KOF, and I can't really disagree. The option of picking Advanced or Extra mode is a welcome option, giving the option to play the game more to the style that you prefer. The game engine is tweaked, solid and sturdy. As far as the game's atmosphere goes, while SNK did an awesome job incorporating the "TV broadcast" theme, other areas of the game don't seem to have that special touch. Backgrounds still look good, but aren't exceptional, as opposed to some of the awesome backgrounds of the past (King's Cafe '95, Osaka '96). The music is... bizarre. There isn't stage specific music, so the BGM can change two to three times in one fight... and some have said the BGM is nothing more than crowd noise. As well, "little" things seem to have been skimped on: Billy, who has one of the coolest opening quotes of all time ("I am going to punch you so bad!"), has ALL of the motions of his saying this, but he doesn't actually say it! Another little thing, Saturn-version-wise, that seems to have been swept under the carpet is the English language option. One of the strongest features of SNK's Saturn ports has been the ability to play them in English, since we never get any of them over here. Hopefully this was a time-constraint issue, and not an option taken out permanently.



"THE TRADITION IS CONTINUED WITH THIS YEAR'S VERSION: KOF'97, QUITE POSSIBLY THE BEST TITLE IN THE SERIES TO DATE"





"THE OVERALL GAME IS EXCEPTIONAL AND OF UNQUESTIONABLE QUALITY..."

And... there is Blue Mary, who I have dubbed "The Coolest Looking Sprite Character in a 2D Fighting Game." EVERYTHING about her is just wonderful, from the look of her sprite, to her win poses (Mary shoots you! Mary fans herself!), to the adorable way that she gets upset when a teammate loses. Call me obsessed if you will (Ed's Note: OK, I will), but you have to admit that SNK did a bang-up job of bringing her into the KOF world. They did my favorite character right, and that only makes KOF'97 all worth it for me.

And for all of you that are wondering, SNK did NOT optimize KOF'97 for use with the 4 meg RAM cart. If this had been done, you could have seen things like little to no loading between rounds, no loss in animation, and better sound. Unfortunately, that didn't happen (supposedly due to the tensions between Capcom and SNK). While the game does do a good job of bringing the arcade home, some character and background animation is missing. Most people won't notice the difference, but if you've played the game extensively, the small faults may start to bug you as time goes by (Damn politics! This version could have been so perfect!). However, SNK seems to be getting good at the 1 meg RAM cart translations, as loading times between rounds, and in other places, have gotten shorter since last year (yea!).

KOF'97 isn't a tough call—while it's a bit rough in some of its finer details, the overall game is exceptional and of unquestionable quality. Who knows where KOF'98 will take us, who will stay and who will go (I'm afraid we've seen the last of Chizuru this year, sadly), and if SNK is going to take the series in drastic new ways as some are saying. So, if KOF'98 is to be greatly changed, I'm happy to say that KOF'97 will be able to stand proud as the best of the first four years. *S*



SHIDOSHI'S
•KING OF FIGHTERS '97 CORNER•



"SECRET CHARACTERS"

THERE ARE A NUMBER OF SECRET CHARACTERS, WHICH INCLUDE AN OLD-SCHOOL '94 VERSION OF KYO, AND OROCHI VERSIONS OF CERTAIN CHARACTERS (CHECK OUT THE MEGA-HARDCORE OROCHI LEONA!). ALL CODES ARE DONE AT THE CHARACTER SELECT SCREEN, AND WITH SPECIFIED BUTTONS (EVEN IF YOU'VE RECONFIGURED YOUR CONTROLLER).

'94 KYO: MOVE TO KYO, HOLD START.
OROCHI IORI: MOVE TO IORI, HOLD START, PRESS LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT, X+A.
OROCHI LEONA: MOVE TO LEONA, HOLD START, PRESS UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN, UP, DOWN, Y+B.
OROCHI BAND: OPEN UP OROCHI IORI AND LEONA, THEN AT ANY CHARACTER, HOLD START, PRESS UP, LEFT, DOWN RIGHT, UP, DOWN, X+B

"DO YOU LIKE ME?"

PICK YOUR FIRST CHARACTER, THEN HOLD X. A SMALL FACE WILL APPEAR, AND AS YOU MOVE FROM CHARACTER TO CHARACTER, YOU WILL GET DIFFERENT FACES. THIS TELLS YOU WHAT THE CHARACTER YOU JUST PICKED AND THE CHARACTER YOU ARE HIGHLIGHTING THINK OF EACH OTHER: SMILE FOR FRIENDS, NO EMOTION FOR INDIFFERENT, FROWN FOR FOES. USE THIS TO ORDER YOUR TEAM SO THAT FRIENDS FOLLOW ONE ANOTHER FOR ADDED BENEFITS!

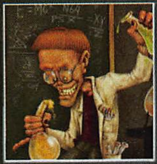
"ADVANCED OR EXTRA?"

SO WHAT DOES ADVANCED AND EXTRA MEAN? ADVANCED PLAYS MORE LIKE KOF'96, WHILE EXTRA PLAYS MORE LIKE KOF'95. WITH ADVANCED, YOU CAN ROLL (WITH AB), ESCAPE THROWS (WITH AB), CHARGE UP TO THREE POW METERS, AND EXECUTE YOUR POW (ABC WITH TWO OR MORE POW METER CHARGES), FOR SOME. WITH EXTRA, YOU CAN DODGE (WITH AB), CHARGE UP YOUR POW METER (ABC), AND HAVE INVINCIBLE HOP BACKS. WHICH STYLE FITS YOU BEST?

R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SNK
PUBLISHER - SNK
FORMAT - CD+1 M.RAM CART
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



ORIOCHI SHIDOSHI
"Are you ready?"





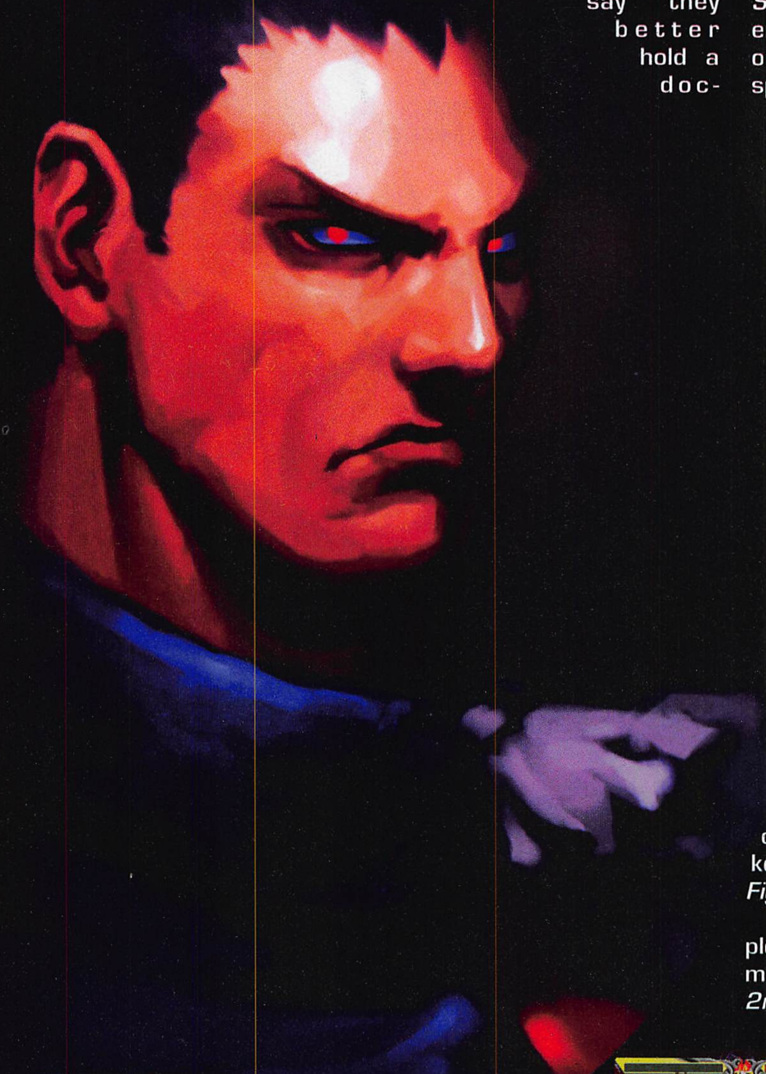


Bow your head in a moment of silence, please. What you are looking at right now is the second 4 meg RAM cart game released in Japan that we will **NEVER** see in the good ol' "we never get what we want" USA. However, through the magic of importing, along with reflexes like greased lightning (in order to perform that tricky, not recommended by *GameFan*, cart swap), you too can play the latest and greatest arcade-perfect Capcom fighting game translation (<whew>, deep breath).

In any event, what you're staring at **is** the arcade game. Oh, I'm sure there might be a frame here or there missing, and the sounds may be a little muffled, but anybody that can notice things like that, well, let's just say they better hold a doctoral degree in frame counting, and sound-analyzing from the N. Rox school of anality (now accepting applications for Fall admission).

Gameplay-wise, most of you know the drill: Pick one of fifteen different monster-based characters like Demitri or John Talbain and take the good old *Street Fighter* engine for one last spin (at least until *Marvel Super Heroes Vs. Capcom* shows up). Utilize the time-honored quarter-circle, half-circle, and of course the 'Dragon Punch' motion to brutalize your opponent with big, multi-hit combos. Not what you'd call revolutionary, but the minor modifications to gameplay do keep the game from becoming nothing more than *Street Fighter* with monsters.





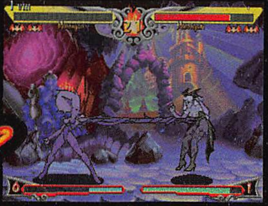
The addition of Guard Reversals (essentially more complex alpha counters) and EX attacks (charged up special moves like fireballs, which also put in an appearance in *SFIII 2nd Impact*) do add some variety to the increasingly standard, "We'd make another, but when we're still making bank on this one, why bother," *Street Fighter* engine. So while the gameplay isn't exactly what I'd refer to as revolutionary, the *Darkstalker* series is still a great deal of fun-especially with character designs like this.

And that's what has always set apart the *Darkstalker* universe from Capcom's other









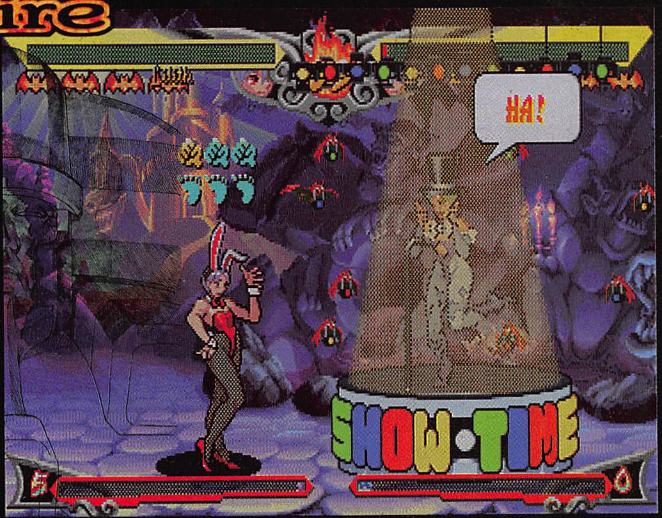




PIRE IOR™

Lord f pire

fighting game stables: the rippingly cool characters with super-hot animation (and in fact, the current Capcom CPS2 animation style originated with the *Darkstalkers* games. Beasts like John Talbain (the werewolf, and my personal favorite), Demitri (the vampire 'hero' of the game and an all around pain in the neck—heh, nothing like a little feeble humor after only 3 hours of sleep) and of course Baby Bonnie Hood (Little Red Riding after about 200 cups of coffee, and packing an uzi to boot—there's someone you don't want to mess with) among many others. Without question, if you need character designers, Capcom is the place to raid (just ask SNK).



The 4 meg cart also once again struts its stuff, with animation so closely approximating the original CPSII arcade machine that you'll want to run to your nearest Super Gun usin', JAMMA board havin' friend and rubbin' it in their "I have too much money to spend" faces (doesn't everybody have a friend like that?). Animation is stellar, with all the frames and none of the fat usually associated with arcade ports—of special note is the fact that all of the monstrous supers in the game are just as large and over-the-top as its arcade counterpart (especially BBH's 'wild huntsman' super). The music made a solid transition and the sounds seem to be spot on (at least to my 'permanently damaged from too much really loud video game techno music' eardrums). As for load times, after the initial load, the game boots even faster than *X-Men vs. Street Fighter* (may have something to do with the lack of extra characters to load into RAM) if you can believe that. I mean it's just like having the arcade machine in your living room (there's an 80's console reference if there ever was one).

Your duty would appear to be clear, mortal. Board the nearest stage and snap up the latest in Capcom's CPSII menagerie, and prepare to battle among the immortals. With *Vampire Savior* having turned out this well, the salivating has already begun *for Marvel Super Heroes vs. Capcom*, *Gem Fighter*, and of course *Marvel vs. Capcom* (of course that last one is an assumption, but c'mon, this is Capcom after all).

ECM



R REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - CAPCOM	# OF PLAYERS - 1-2
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD/CART	AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



ECM
It's not as if I really wanted this anyway... right.



First off, I'm really really tired of a number of things: (1) That the Saturn is dead and what's left is an RPG that might not be seen for many moons, an above-average action game and a gun game that should be sealed away in a metal canister and shot into the sun, and (2) having played nearly twelve hours straight of *Dragon Force 2* has made me very physically tired. That's a good thing you say?? Not really, but it's good enough for this *Dragon Force* fanatic to build up vast battalions of sword-toting warriors, paint my face, and yell "FREEDOM!"... Okay, so I didn't yell... but my face paint was pretty decent, especially with a nice shade of pink...

Taking place 500 years after the original *Dragon Force*, you must once again defend the land from impending doom as one of eight monarchs from each of the countries. For those who never played *Dragon Force*, I'll give you the *Reader's Digest* version of what the game is about. In a nutshell, *Dragon Force* is a strategic RPG, where your character, along with allied (or conquered) generals, gains levels and powerful abilities by defeating enemy armies and your goal is

















to defeat the main evil guy. Battles take place in epic confrontations as each of your generals command up to 100 troops from 12 different classes. Commands take place on the fly, with various formations and attack styles available dependent upon the general. And the battles themselves are a treat as 200+ soldiers clash to the sound of dramatic (sometimes overly) musical scores.



Battling opponents isn't the only thing to worry about; as you gain notoriety and experience, keeping troops happy and in line becomes more of a duty, as well as building up your fortifications. This allows you to store more troops, and gives you "home turf" advantage. Yes, all this was featured in *Dragon Force*, and *Dragon Force 2* continues that tradition, with some minor upgrades, as well as a few small faults.





One of the biggest changes apparent is the new style of the game. While it retains its 2D look and feel, characters have been given a harder, more realistic look when compared to the original. While I can't say I hate this look, I do prefer the cuter, comical design of the original, when compared to a less clean, more pixellated version of troops and characters. Pixelation becomes a major issue especially when using powerful magic and special attacks during battle. Obviously, the design team was trying for a more 3D look and feel—magic and special attacks will shift the camera to different angles and views. While pretty cool at first, the pixellation reminds me of a recent game I reviewed that I'd rather forget about (<hack>, House, <cough>, of the... <ugh>). The music is another letdown, as rising and inspiring chords from the original begin to fade in memory and the plain and tragically bad soundtrack of this version spews forth its audibly annoying droning. This is especially noticeable during battles; sometimes soft hums of music sharply contrast with major battle sequences. The sound effects are decent, and the voice acting nearly matches the personalities of each main character.







While the graphics are decent, and the music should be thrown out the window, gameplay remains the same with some minor, but solid additions. Play controls remain the same, as fortifying castles is a must, though now searching is automatically done for you. Also, saving can be done any time, so you don't have to worry about rushing back to your castle in order to save. But perhaps the best new feature is being able to combine different troop classes instead of being limited to one type per battle as in the first *DF*. Though still limited to a max of 100 each, an army can consist of 2 out of the 20 different troop types. This allows some creative match-making, adding another strategic element to a game already rich in troop assignment, positioning, and formation jousting. Much like the original, magic spells play a key role in the game and sometimes make TOO much of a difference.

While *Dragon Force 2* has nearly zero possibility of coming to the US, perhaps it shouldn't. With only marginal improvements and some nasty minor letdowns, *Dragon Force 2* probably wouldn't do as well, even with the large following that it has. However, if you are a fan of the original, can handle some minor Japanese language, and have an urge to purge Legendra once again, *Dragon Force 2* will keep you up for a late night or two. ***DH***







REVIEW

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA OF JAPAN

PUBLISHER - SEGA OF JAPAN

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MODERATE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



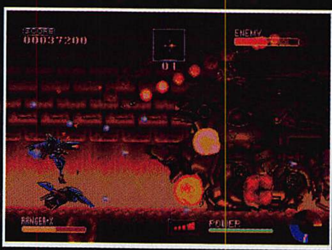
DANGOHEAD

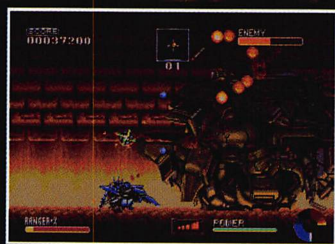
It's games like these that make me ask, "Did the Saturn have to die so soon?!?"

THE GRAVEYARD

This month we get tricky and feature one 32-bit and one 16-bit classic. First, we'll take a look at one of the titles released during the Genesis' glory years: *Ranger X*, a side-scrolling adventure/shooter. On the 32-bit side of the cemetery (they don't like mingling with the dead of 16-bit), there's *Hermie Hopperhead*, a game that was near and dear to the heart of many a die hard platform addict...

RANGER X





Ranger X was a side-scrolling action shooter that featured the player piloting a large mech across multiple levels of jumping and shooting action. And instead of being a rather straightforward, *Contra*-esque affair, the levels generally required at least a little more thought. Sequences that included dodging enemy searchlights, destroying maggot-type critters with sunlight let in through holes blown in the ceiling, etc. And in addition to the standard mech and power-ups, you also had access to a little cycle type vehicle to ride on and served to essentially double your life bar.





And while the gameplay was definitely solid, and tremendously enjoyable, it was the graphics that were something special. This was one of the games that pushed the Genesis further than it had gone and was a contemporary of *Shinobi 3* and *Gunstar Heroes*. Phenomenal line-scrolling, 128 colors on-screen (not sure how Gau got around the 64-color barrier of the Genesis' hardware limitations), just plain beautiful graphics. Even playing it now the game still manages to impress (especially the line-scrolling). Oh, and the wire-frame intro, cut-scene, and ending graphics were pretty hot too.





Those of you out there that never experienced this (shame on you!), should be able to find it for about $5 used at any number of shops that carry used games. Go and grab one of Sega's finest hours, in my humble opinion. You'll thank me for it later.





RANGER







Hermie Hopperhead











When the 32-bit systems debuted, it was somewhat understood (no matter how foolishly) that if you wanted the hottest in 3D games you went for Sony's PlayStation. If you wanted really blazing 2D games then you went the Saturn route. This misguided belief led to many a gamer believing that the PlayStation was pretty much incapable of doing really great 2D graphics (*Raiden Project* should have told them something, <sigh>). Then along came *Hermie Hopperhead*, one of the first, standard *Mario*-esque 32-bit platformers (hell, one of the *only* standard *Mario*-esque platformers). Reminiscent of *Yoshi's Island*, at least in regards to Hermie's use of eggs as weapons, it was a great first effort from the Yukes development team (creators of the *Touken Retsuden* wrestling games for Tomy).





Hopping and bopping enemies on the head was the order of the day for Hermie. Travel through your standard side-scrolling universe, with generous parallax and some decent lighting effects. Colors are vibrant and the animation isn't half-bad.



But this game wasn't and isn't about the graphics (though they are good), it's about standard, 2D gameplay. Gameplay that is sorely lacking in the 32-bit world. I know many, many of you out there grew weary of this type of game back in the 16-bit days, but I never really could get enough of it. It was games like this and *Skull Monkeys* that got me into console games in the first place (their 8-bit ancestors anyway) and I sorely miss those days of yore.





Running and jumping through *Hermie* was representative of what made so many 16-bit games classic. The gameplay is tight and totally perfect, with precise leaping and some novel uses of Hermie's eggs. He can have 3 at a time tagging along behind him, and as you complete levels, you can hatch the critters from inside the eggs that will assist later in the quest.



It's too bad that games like this are so few and far between. Worse yet, there doesn't appear to be too much hope in the future for the once mighty platformer. Even the Neverhood (creators of the fabulous *Skull Monkeys*) is working on a 3D game (oh the pain...). Track this one down, if you can... it's the last of a dying breed. ***ECM***



AnimeFan

Japanese Anime, Manga, Asian live-action, and all related products



Software Sculptors
Tenchi Screen Saver



Seeing as how I can never get enough of Tenchi (and friends), I jumped at the chance to check out the *Tenchi Muyo! Screen Saver*. The concept is this: Software Sculptors has created a screen saver that brings up various QuickTime clips from the *Tenchi Muyo* OVA series (including the Mihoshi and Pretty Sammy specials). You are given a series of "modules" (folders containing a set amount of clips) to choose from, and then the animated clips are displayed at random locations on your screen after a set amount of time.

You're given a vast array of movie clip collections, with 18 different modules containing 10-12 different movie clips. The modules come in a wide variety, from ones that collect clips of a specific character to random scenes from the entire series. The whole screen saver process is very smooth: each new QuickTime movie clip comes up quickly and without any sort of pause in the playback. Video clips can be played in one of two ways: off of your hard drive, or straight off the CD. Playing off your hard drive is the preferred method (so you don't have to always have the CD in your drive), but in order to have a good selection, be prepared to have some extra hard drive space open to store all of the clips (each module is approximately 8-10 meg). The only real complaint is that if you're familiar with the series, you'll notice that some of the clips should have been a few seconds longer to catch more of or complete the humor of the scene.







As well, a Video Jukebox is included on the *Tenchi Muyo! Screen Saver* CD. The jukebox contains full "videos" for seven different Tenchi songs: "Opening Theme," "Talent for Love," "Sleeping Beauty," "Pretty Sammy," "I'm a Pioneer," "Washu's Lullaby," and "Lonely Moon." Even better, each song is presented in both English and Japanese language versions. Also included in the jukebox is a "Still Frame Collection," a collection of stills from the OVA series (which comes from one of the OVA episodes; which exact one I can't remember offhand). The jukebox can be played in both 8-bit and 16-bit video versions, to better suit your computer setup.

Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki:The Screen Saver is just one of four screen savers from Software Sculptors (the others are *BubbleGum Crisis*, *Ranma 1/2*, and *Project A-ko*). If you're in the market for a new screen saver, and can't think of a better way to save your monitor than with scenes from your favorite anime, you can't go wrong with any one of these products. *- Shidoshi*

Computer Goods

Well, I had plans to feature some other computer products here, but due to time constraints, I'll save those for next issue. Instead, I'll make this page totally *Tenchi* and look at the current soundtracks released by Pioneer in the US. As anime grows larger in the US and enters the mainstream more and more as days go by, US companies are willing to take chances on bringing a wider variety of products to our shores (since there are more fans to offer said products to). One of the areas of life that has slowly grown over time (but has indeed grown) is anime soundtracks. Not too long ago, if you wanted a soundtrack to your favorite anime, you ordered an expensive import copy from Nikaku Animart. Then, a few soundtracks starting making their way to the US, one of the first being, if I remember correctly, *Project A-ko*. Nowadays, quite a few companies have gotten into the soundtrack business. One of these companies is Pioneer, and in keeping with their tradition of "If we're going to do anime, let's do it right," they have produced what I feel are some of the best US version soundtracks out there. Why, you ask? Well, first of all, since they have the money and power to do so, Pioneer re-records many of the songs in English for the dub versions of Tenchi. Now, I hear some of you out there screaming. "Blasphemer!" you yell in my direction. Calm down, I love J-pop—for some strange reason, the fact that they are Japanese pop songs makes them okay, whereas if they were from anywhere else I'd laugh at such music. As well, songs with lyrics that I don't understand has never bothered me, so long as the singing is good and the music is catchy. But you have to admit that when you understand the lyrics, you can sing along far better and you appreciate the song more. While some may disagree, I think Pioneer does a **FABULOUS** job with their translated songs. The lyrics and vocals still sound very "anime-esque," except now you understand every word. It's sort of like how dubbed anime comes in two different ways—anime that sounds like it was changed into English, or anime that sounds like it's still in Japanese, but you're hearing it in English. (I'm guessing that probably makes no sense to most of you out there, but I can't seem to explain it better than that). Since I'll just confuse you more by trying to explain, we'll just leave it at this: Their English versions are real good. So, they take their soundtracks, and they throw on both the original Japanese and new English versions of the songs—that way, if you prefer the original versions, fine, if you like the English version as well, there you go. Add in a collection of background music, and you've got yourself a cool little soundtrack. Currently, there are four different *Tenchi* soundtracks available: *Tenchi Muyo in Love! Original Movie Soundtrack, Tenchi-Muyo! OAV Best Volume 1, Tenchi Muyo! OAV Best Volume 2, and Tenchi Universe Collection* (TV series) Soundtrack. Music-wise, I think the movie soundtrack is the best, because the movie had a fabulous score, but when it comes to lyrical songs, I'd go with *OAV Best 2* (for the simple reason that it has the song "I'm a Pioneer," my favorite *Tenchi* song). As well, there should be a soundtrack for the second Tenchi movie out as you read this. Thankfully, Pioneer has decided to package the latest two soundtracks (*OAV Best 2* and *Tenchi Universe*) in standard clear jewel cases, as opposed to the strange fold-over cardboard ones that their first two soundtracks came in (now if only we can talk them into using decent DVD packaging). If you're looking for Tenchi music, Pioneer is doing a stellar job of giving us US fans a good selection of soundtracks to choose from. With more releases like this, the anime soundtrack market in the US has a bright future. *- Shidoshi*





Soundtracks

ANIMATION FOR A NEW GENERATION!™

1 9 9 8

A.D.V. FILMS

SOL BIANCA

There's nothing the all-female crew of the interstellar pirate ship Sol Bianca likes more than treasure. Armed with a dazzling array of power suits, energy whips and the dimension-warping Sol Bianca herself, these buccaneering battlemaids will give no quarter in their onslaught against the ruthless despot, Batros. SOL BIANCA will prove to be an instant classic!

Approx. 60 minutes.
Available English Dubbed or English Subtitled.

NEON GENESIS EVANGELION: GENESIS 10

Disgraced and dismissed from Nerv, Shinji must once again take control of the dangerously unstable Unit 01 in the most nightmarish confrontation yet... but the worst is still to come. The terrifying truth behind the sinister mask of the Eva is revealed in NEON GENESIS EVANGELION, Genesis 0:10!

Approx. 60 minutes.
Available English Dubbed or English Subtitled.

GOLDEN BOY 6

Kintaro's latest job is working as a production assistant in an animation studio, but when the studio's new film falls behind schedule and the lead voice actress quits, it looks like Kintaro won't be employed for long. Still, since when has a little adversity ever stopped the Golden Boy? Kintaro takes control of his own destiny in GOLDEN BOY 6!

Approx. 30 minutes.
Available English Dubbed or English Subtitled.



AVAILABLE AT...

RECORD TOWN
Music, Movies & More

SATURDAY MATINEE
THE MOVIE STORE

...AND OTHER FINE STORES!

www.advfilms.com

Giant Robo: The OAV Series

Dub / Manga Ent.





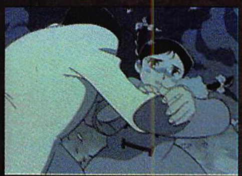
I decided to go back and give *Giant Robo* a bit of coverage for two important reasons: Manga has finally started releasing the series in subtitled format, and the long-awaited final episode, volume 6 (7 in Japan), has arrived at last. Even if you've never seen the *GR* series, I'm willing to bet that 99.9% of you that are reading this have at least heard of it. *GR* tells the story of the Experts of Justice, a band of fighters trying to protect the world from an evil organization called Big Fire. All power on the Earth is now supplied by the Shizuma drive, a form of energy that is clean, efficient, and safe to work with. With Shizuma drives serving mankind, all other forms of energy have been banned or forgotten. But Big Fire strives to bring about "The Night the Earth Stood Still," a plan to plunge the Earth into darkness by destroying all Shizuma drives in existence. Can the Experts of Justice and Giant Robo, controlled by the young boy Daisaku, prevent the falling of this never-ending night? *GR* is done in that "ancient future" style, where you're more likely to find steam-based motors and old-style cars (which has also been seen recently in things like the manga *Steam Detectives*, and the movie *Dark City*). Personally, while the whole idea is rather silly, I love the stuff: I'd kill to live in this kind of future (technology with style and personality still retained). Everything about this series is wonderful: the story, the characters, the art style, the animation. There is only one real complaint that I have against *GR*: that it's very dub-unfriendly. What I mean is that it's one of those anime that just doesn't FEEL right being dubbed, sort of like *Nausicaa* or *Oh My Goddess!* Not that the dub is necessarily bad—it's not—but at the same time, it isn't great (Daisaku's voice REALLY bothers me). Thankfully, Manga is now releasing those sub versions, so that's what I recommend you look into when checking out this title (unless you REALLY can't stand subs... but then, what are you doing watching anime?). Without a doubt, they don't call *Giant Robo* a classic for nothing. Humor, action, big giant robots, lovable villains, a beautiful yet intelligent heroine, who could ask for anything more? *- Shidoshi*



- Animation : A-
- Voice : C+
- Music : B
- Story : A
- Character : A
- Overall : A-





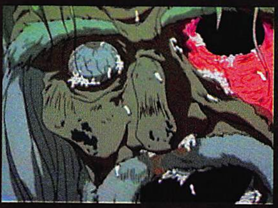
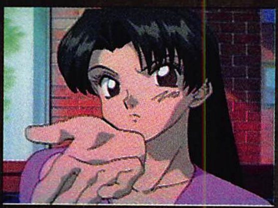


Key: The Metal Idol 5

Sub /Viz Video

Well, I don't have a lot of room to talk about *Key 5*, but there's not really much that I need to say that hasn't been said before. This series continues to draw me into its world, episode after episode, following the adventures of the robot Key and her struggle to become human. Strange people and events surround her, and we desperately try to figure out what is going on and what is going to happen next along with our heroine. In volume five, Key is given the opportunity to finally get her chance at being a star, and as she comes under the direction of a famous agent, her friends begin to uncover pieces of her past that provide more questions than answers. The storytelling, the direction, the character development are all rich and wonderful, and the way it all meshes is nothing short of magical. Beyond making the recommendation that you check this series out without hesitation, I also suggest that you watch the episodes of *Key* in at least some sort of close timespan. It's been a while since I watched volume four, and I was lost in some respects. *Key* is absolute proof that anime doesn't require big breasts, large mecha robots, excessive violence, or ninjas to be worthwhile. *- Shidoshi*



- Animation : B+
- Voice : A
- Story : A
- Character : B
- Music : B+
- Overall : B

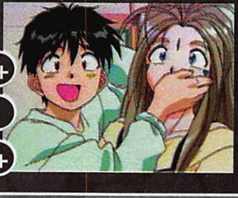
Oh My Goddess!

Sub / AnimEigo

Oldies but Goodies




I cannot tell you how glad I am that I decided to cover *Oh My Goddess!* as my "Oldies but Goodies" title this month. It's been a while since I've watched the *Goddess* OAVs, so I dusted them off and sat down in front of the tele. It didn't take long for me to realize something: *Oh My Goddess!* is, and has always been, my favorite anime. Not *Tenchi*, not *Evangelion*, not *Gunbuster*, not any of those (though I adore all of those greatly). Remember last issue when I exposed the crime that so few episodes of *Final Fantasy* were produced? Well, unfortunately *Oh My Goddess!* is the king (or is it queen?) of this group. Combine stunning voice actors, a funny yet emotional story, and beautiful, crisp, colorful animation which brings Mr. Fujishima's gorgeous character designs and fashions to life, and you get an anime series which obviously only deserves five short episodes. Conspiracy!!! The first three episodes introduce the three goddess sisters, the last two drag us into a gripping plot twist ... and it's over! Aaaaaaahhh! If there is a God (or Goddess) in heaven, before I die I will see more OAV episodes of *Oh My Goddess!* AnimEigo is supposedly re-releasing this series soon, so get a hold of it no matter what. My recommendations: stay away from dub, get it on LD if possible (to do more justice to the animation quality); pray with all your might for a DVD release. Now to find the number for heaven so I can get my own Belldandy... <dials> *- Shidoshi*

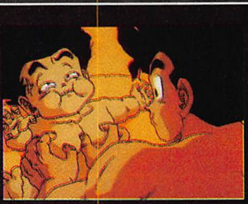


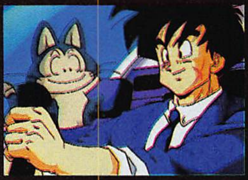




- Animation : A+
- Character : A+
- Voice : A+
- Music : A
- Story : A-
- Overall : A+

DBZ : The Tree of Might
Dual /Pioneer





DragonBall Z: The Tree of Might is a really cool little story, revealing some facets of Goku's past and who he really is (since I'm not a *DBZ* follower, I'm not sure if these plot points have been talked about before this, though). An evil group of space aliens lands upon the Earth to plant the Tree of Might, a plant which sucks the life force of the planet it roots itself in, then produces fruit containing that force. Whoever eats of the fruit grows in strength and power immensely: exactly the idea that Turles, the leader of the group, has in mind. But when Goku and his friends try to stop the aliens, Turles is not only revealed as being a fellow Saiyan, but an acquaintance of Goku's from long ago. The transition to DVD isn't exceptional—I mean, it looks really good compared to other video formats, but when compared to something like *Tenchi* or *Ghost in the Shell* it's only okay. I'm not blaming Pioneer for this, however, as the film is pretty old and probably not in the best of shape. You've got your required English and Japanese voice tracks, subtitles, along with a charac-





Ghost in the Shell — Dual / Manga Ent.

Loyal AnimeFan readers, I'm going to admit to something that you may find shocking: I had NEVER seen *Ghost in the Shell* before I received my DVD copy. Now, before you rush to string me up, hear me out. I'm a very strong opponent of VHS, because I think that it really doesn't do a lot of anime justice (colorful anime gets hurt by its poor picture quality; a lot worse than standard movies do). So, there are certain titles that I held back on seeing until I could at least view them on LD; *Ghost in the Shell* was one of them. Well, it wasn't actually that long ago that I got my LD player, and before I had a chance to pick it up, I heard about its impending DVD release—so I decided to wait. The wait was a BIT longer than I had expected, but no matter, because it's finally here.









So what did I think of the movie? It's cool... really, really cool (sort of an anime *Blade Runner*). It's typical Shirow, highly technical, futuristic sci-fi, and if you're in the mood for that type of anime, nobody does it better than he does. Since I want to focus more on the DVD version than the movie itself, I'll just say this: If you like it, get it. If you haven't seen it yet, get it. Simple as that. "Can anime really look this good?" That's the first thing I thought while watching *GitS* on DVD. The difference between DVD and other formats is so dramatic that it's scary, and it still amazes me just how good anime really does look when given the right format (or how bad other formats kill good-looking anime). It's tough to say that *GitS* looks better than *Tenchi* (the current king of anime DVD), because *Tenchi* is so bright and colorful that it's just meant to show off the power of DVD. However, in any scene with bright colors in *GitS*, they look really good. That's not to say that dark scenes don't look good, because they do, they just don't really give you the full DVD effect. My only real gripe about the picture quality is that it seems to be a bit on the soft side. As I've no idea if this is how the original picture was or not, I can't claim it to be a problem, and even if it is, I don't think it's bad enough that it's worth really complaining about. And I can't go without mentioning that Manga made *GitS* optimized for 16x9, a definite plus for anyone with a wide screen TV. The special 28 minute "Making of Ghost in the Shell" is included on the DVD, and is a cool little extra, with lots of interesting information packed into it. However, for some odd reason it has NO chapter stops, so if you want to watch it, be prepared to sit through the entire half hour boys and girls. However, what I was more impressed with was the included "Guide to GitS." This is a little information library that provides you with an amazing array of information on the movie, from character profiles to different features talking about various aspects of the society in *GitS*.

It took a long time to get *GitS*, but it was worth it. Almost every complaint that I have with the disc are small things that are expected from any first DVD title from a company, yet at the same time Manga does an exceptional job that sets a new standard for cool extras on anime DVD titles. I think *GitS* is right up there with *Tenchi* as "show off" anime titles, and should make up for any problems that came along with the LD release. I hope that Manga continues to pay close attention to quality and the small details on future titles, and if they do, then they will indeed be a force to be reckoned with in the world of DVD anime. Good job, Manga. *- Shidoshi*

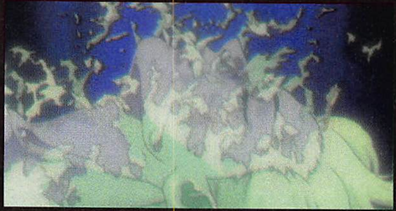
















Animation : A+ | Voice : B+ | Story : A | Character : B+ | Music : A- | Overall : A

ter guide and a cool little *DragonBall* quiz. I wouldn't classify the *DragonBall Z* movies as titles which appeal to any otaku, be they a big *DBZ* fan or not. That doesn't take away from their importance, however, and any *DBZ* fan will want the DVD version of *The Tree of Might* for their prized collection. If you've never seen *DBZ* before, this isn't the best place to start, and I recommend that you get more knowledgeable with the series to understand what's going on better. If you already know what's going on in this epic saga, don't think twice about checking this one out. - *Shidoshi*

Animation	A+
Voice	A+
Story	A-
Character	A+
Music	A
Overall	A+

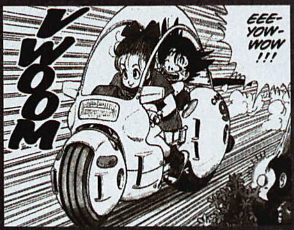


Manga

If you've never heard of *DragonBall*, then this must be the first time that you are reading about manga (or even anime) in your life. *DragonBall* is one of the two most well-known anime series' ever produced (*Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* being the other), and is probably the most widespread manga title released: You can find both the manga and anime all over the world, in a wide variety of countries and languages. The man responsible for this long-running series (it's been going on since at least the early '80s) is Akira Toriyama, who has also done other works like *Dr. Slump*, and has contributed character designs for such video games as *Chrono Trigger*, *Tobal*, and the *DragonQuest* series.



Finally, thanks to Viz comics, American manga fans will finally get the chance to experience this epic manga series. Viz has decided to start releasing both *DragonBall* and *DragonBall Z* (the follow-up series) at the same time for one specific reason: there are so many volumes of these two titles that it would take YEARS and YEARS to even get close to the *DragonBall Z* storyline. In fact, upon the release of both *DB* and *DBZ*, each first issue sold over 30,000 copies, beating *Ranma 1/2* to become Viz's best selling title. If you're checking out either of the *DragonBall* series, you'll notice that you can only purchase them in the "unflipped original" format. For those of you who aren't sure what I mean: in Japan, books and comics are read from right to left, not left to right as we read things here in America. Take this issue of GameFan, hold it the opposite way that you would normally hold a magazine (with the spine in your right hand and the back cover facing you), and read it from back to front—that's how many magazines are in Japan. When bringing manga out here in the United States, the tradition has been to "flip" all of the pages of artwork so that it would read "correctly" for the US. Now, a character who was originally facing to the right in the Japanese version of the manga is now facing to the left in the US version, and that same person who was right handed before is now left handed.



However, Viz has recently started experimenting with releasing manga over here in the US in its original unflipped version, which requires a little getting used to since you now have to read the manga a totally different way than you are used to. Once you get accustomed to it, though, it's quite cool, and a good feeling knowing that you're reading it the original way it was intended to be read. Viz's first attempt at doing this was with *Evangelion*, which is being released in both a flipped "normal" version and an unflipped "special edition," to see which one readers prefer. At first, the difference in choice was pretty much split down the middle, but after a while the unflipped version actually began to outsell the "normal" version by quite a bit. In fact, the unflipped version of *Evangelion* is doing so well that Viz has even decided to release *Evangelion* graphic novels in both formats (at first, they were planning on doing them only in flipped format). As I said, *DragonBall* / *DragonBall Z* is only in unflipped format because that is the deal that was made with Mr. Toriyama. Many manga artists have not wanted their titles to come out in the US because they were opposed to the whole idea of releasing their titles flipped. Now that Viz has started the ball rolling with this attempt, hopefully it will catch on and we'll get to see titles that we never would have seen otherwise.



I have but one reservation about this whole idea of releasing manga unflipped, and that is the fact that Viz feels the need to put little "direction indicators" on most of the pages to let you know which way you should be reading. I find these VERY annoying, and out of place on the pages. They have a full-page explanation at the back of the comic (which would be the front if you didn't know what was going on), and that should be enough to explain to anyone how to read them (and for those who still don't get it, well... they don't deserve to. <hehe>).

Future Graphic Novels

Inu-Yasha Vol. 2
b&w, 192 pages
$15.95 USA/$21.50 CAN
SHIPS 7/10

Neon Genesis Evangelion Vol. 1
(Standard & Collector's Edition)
b&w & color, 176 pages
$16.50 USA/$22.25 CAN
SHIPS 7/17

Battle Angel Alita:
Angel's Ascension
story & art by Yukito Kishiro
b&w, 256 pages
$16.95 USA/$24.25 CAN
SHIPS 7/24

Pulp Aug '98 Vol. 2, No. 8
manga anthology
b&w, 128 pages
$5.95 USA/$8.00 CAN
SHIPS 7/10



The "Standard" US release of Eva



Same panel from unflipped "Special Edition"

Anime News Service



Popular Anime Titles Become TV Shows

Recently, three popular anime titles came to Japanese television: *Record of Lodoss War*, *Silent Mobius*, and *Cat Girl Nuku Nuku*. In Japan, it's very common to have anime shown on primetime television, but here in American, we can only imagine and dream of such a world. So, this month Anime News Service takes a look at these three television shows.

Record of Lodoss War

Started on April 1st on Tokyo TV (and no, this isn't an April Fools joke). Illustrated by Kazuhiro Soeta, Finished by Takao Suzuki, Text by Koji Mitarai.

Story: There is a war between all the different lands, brought about by the hands of a witch's plot. The *Lodoss* TV series tells the tale of the heroes of Lodoss, and their adventure to not only stop the witch, but bring peace to the current struggle for power.



Writers: Ryou Mizuno, Masahito Natsumoto. Director: Yoshihiro Takamoto. Screenplay: Katsuaki Nagase. Character Design: Kazuhiro Soeta.

As well, the voice drama, "Welcome to Lodoss!", which will come out on the same day as the *Lodoss War* TV series, will be acted by the same cast.

Silent Mobius

Another long-awaited TV series finally hitting in Japan is *Silent Mobius*, which began on April 7th on Tokyo TV. What is interesting is that the television series differs from the *Silent Mobius* manga and first movie. For example, Katsumi's mother, Fuyuka, is already dead. Katsumi is then invited to join the AMP by its director to help solve the mystery of her mother's death. At this point, Katsumi has no real knowledge of the AMP, so at the beginning of the television series, Katsumi is seen as sort of an "ordinary girl." From this point on, the television series will tell a story not told by the manga, and viewers will get to follow Katsumi as she struggles to fit into the AMP, and how she grows up to the world around her.

Story: It has been over twenty years since the biggest disaster of the century occured. In order to protect themselves, people created huge urban areas inside Tokyo that are protected by the spirits. However, suddenly a creature from the demon world descends upon Tokyo to invade it. *Silent Mobius* tells the tale of a group of women working for the AMP, who fight against these demons to protect their home.

Nuku Nuku Cat Girl



The final television series we're taking a look at is *Cat Girl Nuku Nuku* (a favorite of Waka and Shidoshi's). Starting in January, the television show finished up in April. The series covered a year in the life of Nuku Nuku, and her trials and tribulations of being a high school senior (which is hard enough when you're a normal human). At the end of the series, news comes that a large meteorite is about to crash into the Earth! What happens to Nuku Nuku, and the Earth itself? Well, *Nuku Nuku* will have been released on VHS and LaserDisc in Japan by the time you will be reading this, so it's possible that some of you readers out there could get ahold of copies of it. As well, the video releases will also contain an additional second story, so even more reason to purchase them! *- Akari Fujita*

My thanks this month go out to the elegant Miss Fujita for the above information, Waka-chan for being such a cool guy and for all of the help he's given me through my first three issues of AnimeFan, and everyone else here at GF who I will miss terribly once I'm back in Nebraska. (To explain that, I'm doing a bit of a location change, though I'll still be supreme overlord and ruler of AnimeFan, don't you worry <hehe>)! *- Shidoshi*



Live Action

Jackie Chan Collection

DVD / Dub / Simitar Ent.









First of all, you may be wondering... why in the world is AnimeFan covering Asian live-action movies? Well, many US anime companies have started releasing Asian live-actions films, and hey... they're just so cool in the first place!



Anyhow, I've been a Jackie Chan fan now for about... well, okay, only a few years, since his films started coming out over in the US. So what better way to catch up on Jackie's early film career than with the wide selection of movies Simitar has released on DVD? The titles in their lineup are: *Dragon Fist, Fearless Hyena, Fearless Hyena II, Half a Loaf of Kung Fu, New Fist of Fury, Snake & Crane - Arts of Shaolin, Spiritual Kung Fu, The Killer Meteors*, and *To Kill With Intrigue*.



Now, I've never seen any of these movies on any other format, but I've got no real complaints. Seeing as how these are older movies, not exactly the biggest budget, and the prints probably aren't in the best of shape, I wasn't expecting titles that would show off the highest quality DVD can produce. My main concern was with compression and artifacts, and there's none of those problems present here. However, I do have one complaint. While all of the movies are presented with both English and Cantonese vocal tracks, there are no English subtitles, not even through closed captioning. So... while you can watch the movies in their original language, unless you actually understand Cantonese it doesn't do much good.

Don't let that stop you from checking these out if you're a fan of Jackie, though, as for a small fee you get a better copy of his early movies than you could see on VHS or the Sunday Kung-Fu Matinee. And if you're just a person looking for a movie with some great fight scenes and wonderfully bad dubbing, you can't go wrong with these. *- Shidoshi*

AnimeFan
MONTHLY TOP 5

A.D.V. FILMS

Reader's Top 5

Grand Prize

Nicole Tong
Manchester, NH

Top Five
1: Sailor Moon
2: Evangelion
3: Slayers Try
4: Ranma 1/2
5: DragonBall Z

First Prize

Obumneme Asota
Normal, IL

Top Five
1: Cutey Honey
2: Escaflowne
3: IRIA
4: Green Legend RAN
5: Armitage III

Second Prize

Charlotte Howard
Bexley, OH

Top Five
1: Devil Hunter Yohko
2: Blue Seed
3: Fatal Fury
4: Project A-ko
5: Evangelion

That's right anime fans, it's time to speak up and let us know what you're watching! List your top 5 favorite anime and send it in, attention Anime Fan! As always, we wouldn't dream of asking you to go to all the trouble of writing, mailing and stamp-licking for nothing: We'll enter you in our bi-monthly drawing (one entry per person, per month) for the 20-inch Eva model pictured below and *Evangelion* 1 thru 6!! Two additional prizes will be given away each month. 1st prize: a full set of *Burn Up W* and a *Burn Up W* T-shirt and 2nd prize: a full set of *Devil Hunter Yohko* courtesy of AD Vision!

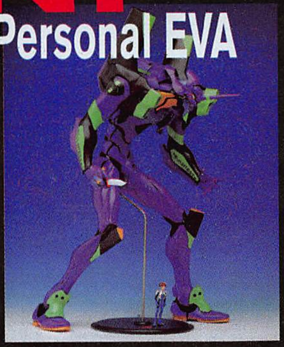


Waka's Top Five of the Month

1: Neon Genesis Evangelion
2: Record of Lodoss War
3: Castle in the Sky Laputa
4: Gunm (Battle Angel)
5: Memories



WIN!
Win Your Very Own, Personal EVA



To register simply send your top 5 anime picks along with your name, age, and address to: Anime Fan Top Five, 5137 Clareton Drive Ste. 210, Agoura Hills, CA 91301. Grand Prize: EVA Model (EVA Unit 01) and episode 1-6 of *Evangelion*. 1st Place prize: complete set of *Burn Up W* anime and a T-shirt. 2nd place prize: set of *Devil Hunter Yohko* anime. For a free AD Vision catalog write to: AD Vision 5750 Blintiff #217 Houston, TX 77036. No purchase necessary, void where prohibited, yada, yada, yada...

Ratings System Guide

Animation : This constitutes both the quality of the image itself (color, clarity, detail, etc.), and also how well it is animated.
Voice : Voice acting for the anime: do the voices fit the characters, is voice acting really good, poor, etc. For English dubbed anime, this score is in relation to the English dubbed market, NOT the Japanese version. Since the sub/dub argument could mean that NO dub is a good dub to some people, we instead rate it on how good, or poor, it is in comparison to other dubs.
Music : Pretty self explanatory.
Story : How is the story? Is it generic anime fare, or is it different enough to be interesting and enjoyable?
Character : Character design. Covers both the design and personality for the characters, as well as how they are drawn and brought to life. Once again, are the characters generic anime characters, or are they creative and attractive?
Overall : Overall, final score for the anime.

AnimeFan rates on a standard grading scale : A through F, with the option of having a plus or minus rating. This breaks down as A (Great), B (Good), C (Average), D (Below average), F (Poor). A C rating should NOT be considered a "bad" score - an anime given a C is still worth mention, it just doesn't stand out like other titles. Also, distinction between grades is important. For example, a B+ and an A- are two totally different things: a B+ is a good title which does what it does well, while an A- is a great title that has some flaws (but is still the better of the two). And, of course, an A+ is not a perfect score, because there is no such thing as perfection.

Contact Information

Snail mail: AnimeFan
5137 Clareton Drive
Suite #210
Agoura Hills, California
91301

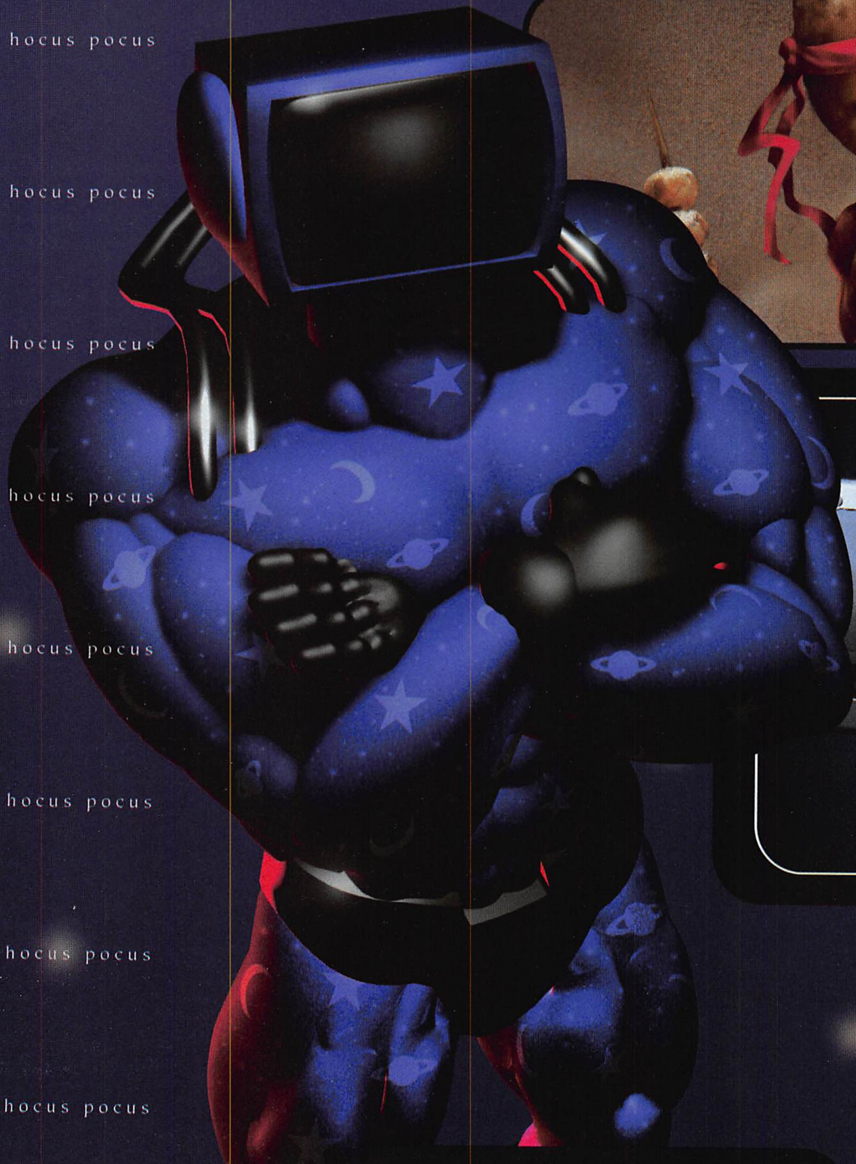
E-mail : shidoshi@gamefan.com
ICQ : Shidoshi (2082815)

HOCUS POCUS

HOCUS POCUS

break the brainless bond
break the brainless bond of contrived codes
and trivial tricks and enter the world of
dangohead and spud's...

hocus pocus







hocus pocus
hocus pocus
hocus pocus
hocus pocus
hocus pocus
hocus pocus
hocus pocus
hocus pocus

ENTER

ENTER cool stuff

THE GAMEFAN
HOCUS POCUS GIVEAWAY!

cool stuff cool stuff

GXTV is the world's first video game TV with hyper-amplified sound and graphics. Enhance the thrill of gaming with adjustable speaker doors, stereo surround sound and a 15-watt sub woofer. Plus, the intense screen graphics will make you feel like your head's right inside the game. GXTV is also a 181-channel, 13" stereo TV with two A/V inputs, stereo headphone jack, backlit remote control and tilt/swivel stand. So whatcha waitin' for? Send in those codes and maybe you can win one of these GXTVs for yourself!

GRAND PRIZE winner

A GXTV!

FIRST PRIZE winner

VIEWPOINT
GAME OF YOUR CHOICE

SECOND PRIZE winner

POCKET GAMEBOY

THIRD PRIZE winner

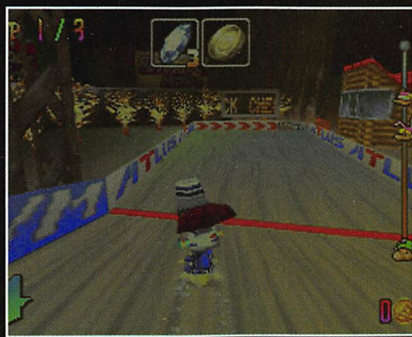
1-YEAR
SUBSCRIPTION
TO GAMEFAN

SNOWBOARD KIDS
SNOWBOARD KIDS

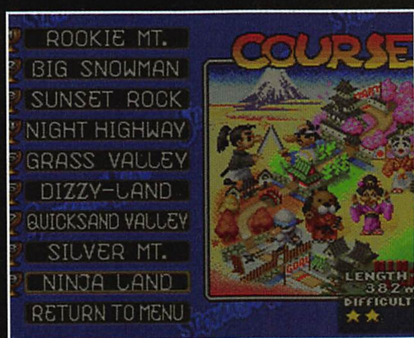
SKULL MONKEYS
SKULL MONKEYS

Snowboard Kids:
All tracks, boards, and secret boarder

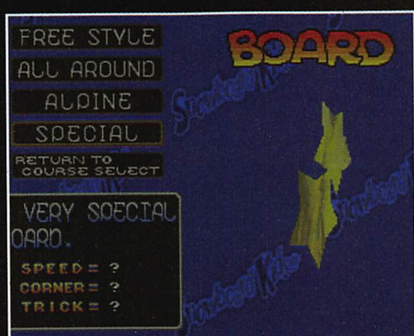
You'd think a snowboarding game with some big-nosed kids on the N64 is pretty cool, eh? Well, one of the cooler multi-player games just got a lot cooler with additons like hidden tracks, new boards, and the ninja boarder, Shinobin.
To start with all the extra mountains, boards, and the hidden character, go to the main title screen (where you can select start, lesson, or option) and input the following:
Analog Stick Down, Analog stick Up, D-pad Down, D-pad Up, C-Down, C-Up, L, R, Z, D-pad Left, C-right, Analog Stick Up, B, D-pad Right, C-Left, and last press Start. If done correctly you'll hear a kid say, "Yeah!"
Now you have all access to the tracks, including the two secret tracks, the hidden boards (including the useless board... what the heck is that for, anyways?), and the shadowy boarder, Shinobin.



WHOA... THRASHIN' BOARD, DUDE!!!







Skullmonkeys
Codes, codes, and more codes

Shoot head - down, Square, Triangle, down, down, Square, Square, right
Shield - R2, Circle, Circle, down, left, Circle, right, down
Bullets - down, Circle, up, R2, left, Triangle, Select, Select
Curly cue - R1, right, Circle, R2, R2, Square, right, Select
Fart head - R1, left, up, L1, L1, Square, right, Select
Phoenix head - Square, Triangle, R2, left, Select, Circle, Triangle, Select
Universe enema - left, Triangle, right, down, Triangle, Select, Select, Select
Superwille - R1, left, Square, Triangle, L1, Triangle, R2, Select
Pause Klaymen - L2, left, Circle, R2, down, Square, Triangle, down
Color Klaymen - L2, Circle, Circle, left, Select, L2, up, down
Psycho Klaymen - down, right, Triangle, L2, up, left, Triangle, Select
Slow mo - L1, Triangle, left, down, R2, Circle, R1, down, Circle, R2
Super Fast Klaymen - left, Square, R2, Circle, R1, down, Circle, R2
Flea Klaymen - R1, left, Square, Triangle, R1, left, Square, Triangle

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS MONTH'S WINNERS!
CONGRATULATIONS
winners

The mighty Monitaur seeks the finest cheats, secrets and tips known to humanity, and we need them from YOU!! We'll look over all the codes you send and award a magnificent Grand Prize every single month! Remember, no cheap codes from previously-published US magazines! Winners will be drawn each month and displayed in the only place where cheaters prosper. (Current subscribers who win a subscription will receive a one-year extension.)

SEND YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS TO:
SEND
cards letters
mail
mail
mail
mail

Hocus Pocus
5137 Clareton Drive
Suite 210
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

grand prize winner:
Danny Troast
Paramus, NJ

first prize winner:
Eddie E. Givens Jr.
via email

second prize winner:
Ramzy Mohamad
New York, NY

third prize winner:
Joel Espana
Venice, CA

JET MOTO 2

Need for Speed 3

Jet Moto 2
Race All Tracks

Go to the options screen and set master difficulty plus five laps per race. Then return to the title screen, go to the one player select screen, find Lil Dave and press X. Next go back to the title screen and press Up, Down, Left, Right, R2, R1, L2, L1 within four seconds. Go back to the options screen and set the number of race laps to three. Go back to the one-player select screen, find Wild Ride and press X. Go back to the title screen and press Up, Left, Down, Right, Square, R2, O, L2 within four seconds. Return to the options screen and set the difficulty to amateur, then turn turbos off. Go to the one player select screen, find Bomber and press X. Go to the title screen and press Up, Down, Left, Right, Up, Down, left, Right within four seconds. Now go back to the options screen and set the difficulty on professional and turn turbos on. Go back to the title screen one last time and press R2, R1, L1, L2, R2, R1, L1, L2 within four seconds.

Race as Enigma
Go to the options screen and set the difficulty to master and six laps per race. Go to the title screen and press Left, Square, Down, Triangle, Right, O, L1, R1 within four seconds.





Need For Speed 3
Hidden tracks and secret cars

Not enough road to satisfy that hunger for skin-ripping velocity? Want to see what El Nino really drives? Enter the following codes by first going to the Options menu, and selecting "User Name." When entered correctly, either a sound or a pop



menu screen will confirm the password:

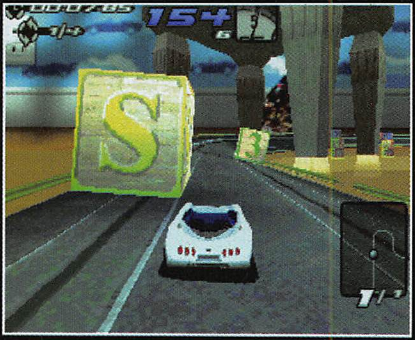
SEEALL - All camera views
ROCKET - El Nino (fastest car in the game)
SPOILT - All cars and tracks (non-hidden)

Hidden Tracks
GLDFSH -Scorpio 7: Underwater

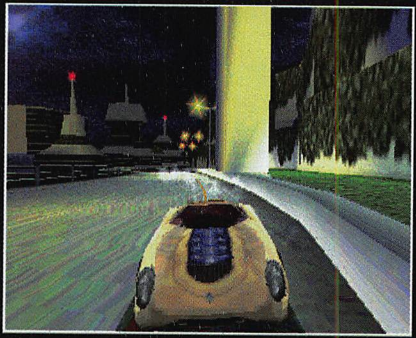




MNBEAM - Spacerace: Space Station
XCNTRY - Autocross: Canyon
XCAV8 - Caverns: Cave with obstacles
PLAYTM - Childs room: Slot car track



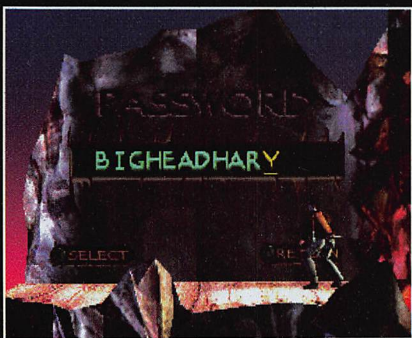






PITFALL 3D
PITFALL 3D

Ptifall 3D: Beyond the Jungle
Way cool codes
Enter the following passwords at the password entry screen:

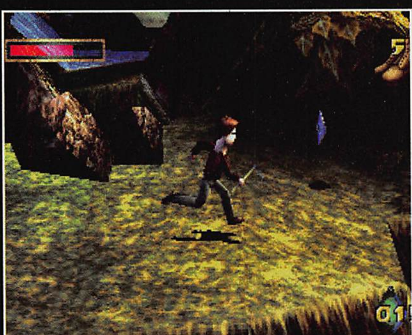


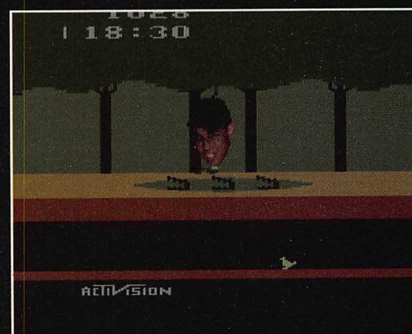


ZEROGHARRY - Makes Harry float
BIGHEADHARY - Big headed Harry
CRANESBABY - Play the original Pitfall!

The following can be entered while playing the original 2600 version of Pitfall:
R1 + R2 - Gary head (programmer of 2600 version)
R1 + Circle - Elvira head (daughter of lead programmer)
R1 + Triangle - Make right crocodile (when in crocodile pit area) say, "Hi Mom!"
L1 + L2 - Infinite lives











GIVEMELIFE - Adds ten lives
PLAYMOVIES - Plays all movies
PITFALLCOMIC - Plays all comic style cutscenes
STEVECRANEME - 99 Lives
2DHARRY - displays Harry in 2D

GAME SHARK CODES
GAME SHARK CODES

Bloody Roar

801C1AFC 3BFF Maximum Beast P1
801C1B4A 3BFF Maximum Beast P2
801C4520 FFFF Open Bonus Options and Art Gallery
801B0178 6308 Slow Motion

Castlevania: SOTN

80097BAO 03E7 Infinite HP
800F4BF6 1400 999 Attack
80097BB0 03E7 Infinite MP
30097A05 0010 Alucard Sword
30097A4B 0010 Gods Garb
30097A6B 0010 Twilight Cloak
30097992 0010 Axelord Sword
30097998 0010 Skull Shield

Ghost in the Shell

Mission 1 Infinite Energy
80120258 00C8
Mission 2 Infinite Energy
8011F390 00C8
Mission 3 Infinite Energy
80120C30 00C8
Freeze Timer
80120C24 0DF7
Mission 4 Infinite Energy
801227A4 00C8
Freeze Timer
80122798 0DF7
Mission 5 Infinite Energy
8011FD4C 00C8
Mission 6 Infinite Energy
801276E4 00C8
Freeze Timer
801276D8 0DF7
Mission 7 Infinite Energy
80125D04 00C8
Mission 8 Infinite Energy
801204A8 00C8
Mission 9 Infinite Energy
801253E4 00C8
Freeze Timer
801253D8 0DF7
Mission 10 Infinite Energy
80125084 00C8
Mission 11 Infinite Energy
80122F84 00C8
Mission 12 Infinite Energy
8012BD50 00C8

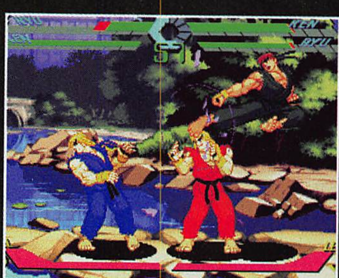
X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

X-MEN VS. STREET FIGHTER

X-men Vs. Street Fighter (PS import):
Tag team mode

Jealous of your Saturn rivals' ability to switch team members while YOU CAN'T?! Well, with this code, you'll finally solve the problem... well, sort of. At the title screen, highlight Battle Mode, press Square, Square, Right, X, and L1 really fast. If you did it correctly, you should see a new option which includes a choice between Original and EX Edition as well as having your Super meter gauge full. Choose Original and enter VS Mode. Choose Ryu and Ken, while the other player chooses Ken and Ryu (always opposite order). Once done, you'll be able to switch between teamates on the fly, without loading. This code will not work with any other character besides Ryu and Ken... but it's better than nothing!







TENCHU

TENCHU

Tenchu (PS import):
Stage select, 99 capacity and items, all items, regain health

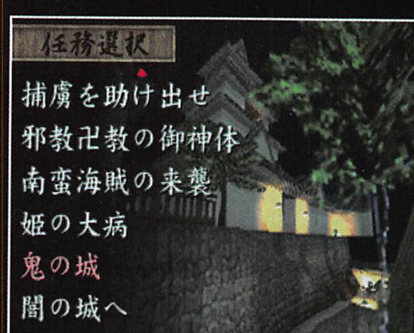
Stage select - At the stage select screen, hold R2, and press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, Square and Triangle. All stages will open up.



All items - At the item select screen, hold R1, and press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, Square, Triangle. All items will be shown.

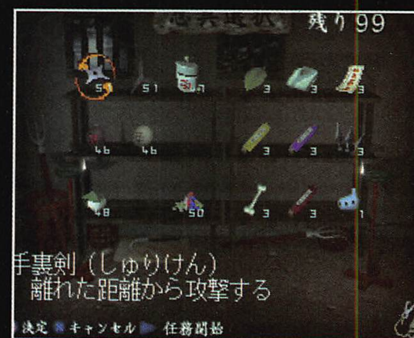
99 capacity - At the item select screen, hold L1, and press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, Square, Triangle. The normal capacity of 15 will jump to 99.



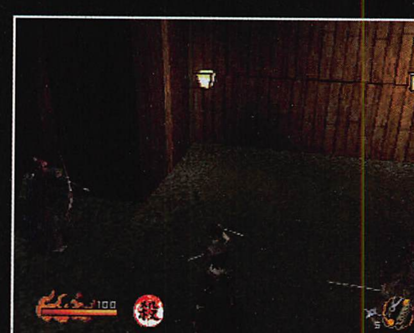


99 max weapons - At the item select screen, hold L1, and press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, Square, Triangle. Each item will increase by 1. Note, the max of the weapons on the right shelf is always 3.

Regain health - Anytime during gameplay, pause the game and press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, Square, Triangle. Unpause and all health will be regained.







NHL 98

NHL 98:
Password codes

Getting front checked, side checked, back checked... well, if this is your case in NHL 98, better check yourself with these password codes below. All codes are entered at the user screen:

BRAINY - big heads on players
PLAYTIME - huge goalies small players
STANLEY - nhl video
GIPTEA - faster play mode
FREEEA - secret free agents
BIGBIG - huge players

QUAKE 64

Quake 64
Debug Menu

Ahhh... Quake 64... such a great game. But if you are having somewhat a hard time, be it fragging fiends, or finding better weaponry, then you're problems are solved.
On the password screen, enter all "Q's" until it says invalid password. Then go to the main menu where you should see a debug menu. Enter and you'll be able to enable the following cheats:
1) God Mode
2) All weapons
3) Warp to any level

TRIPLE PLAY 99

Triple Play 99
Cheats

It's the bottom of the ninth... two men out... two strikes on you... a homer will win the game, but the relief pitcher is really good... what do you do? Thankfully, in Triply Play 99, stessful situations such as these are easily alleviated by inputting the following codes during the game. Note, when performing these commands for the proper code, you must hold all the shift buttons (L1, L2, R1, R2):

Instant homerun (must hit the ball):
Triangle, Square, Triangle, Circle, X, Square, left, right

Instant strike out:
up, down, Triangle, Square, Triangle, Circle, X, Square

Crowd comment:
up, Triangle, down, X

Weather comment:
X, down, Triangle, up

Nickname game:
Circle, right, Square, left

Historical tidbit:
up, Triangle, right, Circle

Stadium info:
down, X, right, Circle

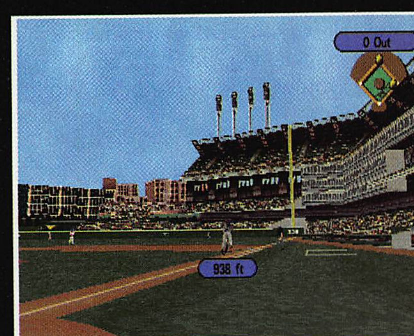
Crowd applause:
Triangle, up, up, Triangle

Crowd cheer:
Square, left, left, Square

Crowd ooh:
X, down, down, X

Crowd boo:
Circle, right, right, Circle





GAME SHARK CODES

Jet Moto 2:

Infinite Turbo (Blade)
8016dcbe 0006
Infinite Turbo (Bomber)
80174896 0006
Infinite Turbo (Gadget)
80171a5e 0006
Infinite Turbo (Li'l Dave)
8016bdee 0006
Infinite Turbo (Steele)
801729c6 0006
Infinite Turbo (Technician)
8016ec26 0006
Infinite Turbo (The Hun)
8017392e 0006
Infinite Turbo (The Max)
8016fb8e 0006
Infinite Turbo (Vampeera)
80170af6 0006
Infinite Turbo (Wild Ride)
8016cd56 0006
All Tracks and Main Trophy
8016af06 0401
8016b0f0 0401
8016b0f2 0401

Need for Speed 3: Hot Pursuit

All Cars and Secret Tracks
800FA9E0 003D
8004392E 0101
80043930 0101
80043932 0101
Start On Lap 4 (Tournament)
d011dd30 0000
8011dd30 0003
Start On Lap 2 (Knock-Out)
d011dd30 0000
8011dd30 0001
Enable Empire City and El Nino
800FA9E0 003D
Enable Nazda C2
8004392e 0101
Enable Ferrari 550 and Diablo
80043930 0101
Enable Jaguar XJR-15 and Mercedes
80043932 0101
8016b0f4 0401
8016b0f6 0401

Playstation Codes

ALIEN TRILOGY
Cheat Mode
At the PASSWORD screen, enter 1GOTPINK8C1DBOOTSON.
Now you have access to the Cheat Menu.

ASSAULT RIGS
Access All Weapons: without pausing, press ⇦, ⇨, ⇦, ⇦, ⇨, ⇦, ⇨, ⇨, ⇧, ⇩, ⇧, ⇧, ⇩, ⇧, ⇩, ⇩
Invincibility: Press ⇦, X, ⇦, X, ⇦, ⇦, X, ⇨, X, ⇨, X, X w/o pausing

BLOOD OMEN: LEGACY OF KAIN
Replenish Life Meter: At any time, during gameplay, press ⇧, ⇨, □, ○, ⇧, ⇩, ⇨, ⇦

BUST-A-MOVE 2: ARCADE EDITION
Another World
Enter R1, ⇧, L2, ⇩ while "PRESS START" is flashing. In PUZZLE MODE, you will see the Another World option.

CART WORLD SERIES
Enter these codes as your name at the CREATE DRIVER screen:
Big Tires: FAT TIRES
No Collision Detection: BANZAI
Cyber-Track: SPACERID
To Access Custom Cars: Enter a new season and enter ROOSTER at the CREATE DRIVER option. Select the Cart World Series team car, then choose any racer and you'll race their custom car.

CODENAME: TENKA
All Weapons:
When the game is paused, hold down L1 while pressing Δ, R1, Δ, □, R1, ○, □, □. When you release L1, all weapons will be available.
Stage Select:
When the game is paused, hold down L2 while pressing ○, ○, □, Δ, R1, □, Δ, ○. When you release L2, you will have the option to skip levels.

COMMAND & CONQUER
Weapon Cheats:
Don't want to build an Advanced Comm or Nod Temple? Enter these codes, while game is paused, to access strikes:
Ion Cannon: ⇨, ⇩, ⇦, ⇦, ⇩, ⇨, ⇨, ⇩, ⇦, X, □, Δ
Air Strike: ⇨, ⇩, ⇦, ⇦, ⇩, ⇨, ⇨, ⇩, ⇦, X, □, ○
5000 Credits: ⇨, ⇩, ⇦, ⇦, ⇩, ⇨, ⇨, ⇩, ⇦
Open Map: ○, ○, ○, ⇧, ⇩, ○, □, R1, ○, ○, ○
Covert Operations:
Enter COVERTOPS at the PASSWORD screen. Now you have access to the Covert Operations.

CONTRA: LEGACY OF WAR
Enter these codes at the TITLE screen:
Access All Weapons: L2, R2, L1, R1, ⇧, ⇩, ⇩, ⇧. Change weapons, during gameplay, by lying down before selecting weapon.
Infinite Continues: L1, R2, L1, R1, ⇦, ⇨, ⇨, ⇦
Stage Select: L2, R1, L1, R2, ⇦, ⇨, ○, □, R2, L2
Hidden Game 1: L2, L1, ⇦, ⇨, R1, R2
Hidden Game 2: R2, R1, ⇨, ⇦, L1, L2

COURIER CRISIS
Level Codes:
Level 1: EFLCIFCGKJ
Level 2: IFLCIFCCKI
Level 3: MFLCIFCOKJ
Level 4: AFLCIFCKKJ
Level 5: FHCLFIGCJL
Level 6: FLCLFICCIL
Level 7: FPCLFIOCJL
Level 8: FDCLFIKCJL
Level 9: KFLCIFCGII
Level 10: OFLCIFCCII
Level 11: CFLCIFCOIJ
Level 12: GFLCIFCKIJ
Level 13: FFCLFIGCJJ
Level 14: FJCLFIOCJJ
Secret Characters:
At the PASSWORD option, enter:
Alien: XFIFTYONEX
Gorilla: SAVAGEAPES

FORMULA 1 CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION
In GRAND PRIX mode, enter codes at EDIT DRIVER screen.
Big Wheels: LITTLE WHEELS
The Apocalypse: CATS DOGS.
Then change weather to RAINY
Bonus Tracks: BILLY BONUS
Advanced Difficulty: BLOOMIN ARD
Easy Difficulty: TOO EASY
Muppet Commentary: BOX CHATTER
Wipeout Mode: PI MAN
Change Sound Effects: SWAP SHOP
Change Graphics: VIRTUALLY VIRTUAL
Overhead View: ZOOM LENSE
Goto Round 16: Change the first letter in Jean Alesi's name to N.

IN THE HUNT
Stage Select
At the title screen, highlight START and press ⇖+SELECT+○.
Infinite Continues:
After using your last CONTINUE, press Δ+SELECT +START during the countdown. You'll get five additional continues.

JET MOTO
With difficulty set to PROFESSIONAL and lap count set at 6, press START. At the title screen, press ○, ○, ○, □, Δ, Δ, □, Δ. You can now access these cheats, at the title screen:

2 Player vs. CPU:
○, □, R2, ○, Δ, L2, ⇨, ⇧
Unlimited Turbos:
Δ, ○, ⇨, R2, ⇧, □, ⇧, Δ
Rocket Racer:
Δ, ⇧, ⇧, L2, L2, ⇧, ⇧, ⇧
Double Stunt Points:
⇨, ⇧, ○, L2, Δ, ○, R1, R2
No Resistance:
□, L1, Δ, ⇨, L1, ⇩, R2, Δ
Air Brakes:
R1, R2, ⇨, L2, ⇧, ○, ⇧, ○
Super Skills:
⇩, ○, ⇦, L1, ⇦, ⇨, ⇦, ⇨
Icy Track:
⇧, R2, R1, ⇨, L1, □, ⇨, ⇨
Access All Tracks
With difficulty on AMATEUR and trophy presenter on MALE, press START. Then press ⇧, ⇨, ⇩, ⇦, ⇧, ⇨, ⇩, ⇦. Then, with difficulty set at PROFESSIONAL and trophy person set at RAIDER'S CHOICE, press START again. Then enter ⇧, ⇦, ⇩, ⇨, ⇧, ⇦, ⇩, ⇨. You are now a MASTER with access to all tracks.

THE KING OF FIGHTERS '95
Access to Omega Rugal and Saishi: Answer YES at TEAM EDIT screen. At CHARACTER SELECT, hold down START and press ⇧+O, ⇨+□, ⇦+X, ⇩+Δ. You can now choose either one.

MACHINEHEAD
Enter these codes at MAIN MENU
Infinite Life: O, L1, L1, L1, O, L1, O, O, L1, O, O, O, L1, L1, L1, L1, L1, O, O, L1
Infinite Ammunition: O, O, O, O, L1, O, L1, L1, O, L1, O, L1, L1, O, L1, O, L1, L1, L1, L1
Level Select: L1, O, L1, L1, L1, O, O, O, O, L1, L1, O, O, L1, O, L1, O, O, O, O. R1 and R2 switches levels.

MADDEN NFL 98
Secret Teams and Stadiums
In FRONT OFFICE, go to CREATE PLAYER and enter any of the following codes. Note: If you save and exit, you will see the teams in TEAM SELECT.

Teams:
EA Sports All-Stars: ORRS HEROS
Tiburon Development Team: LOIN CLOTH
All-Time All-Madden: COACH
All Sixties Team: PAC ATTACK
All Seventies Team: STEELCURTAIN
All Eighties Team: GOLD RUSH
NFC All-Pro Team: ALOHA
ACF All-Pro Team: LUAU
All-Time Stat Leader Team: LEADERS

Stadiums:
Alameda County Coliseum: SNAKE
Astrodome: JETSONS
Joe Robbie Stadium: DANDAMAN
Municipal Stadium: DAWGPOUND
"Old West" Stadium: GHOST TOWN
RFK Stadium: OLDDC
Tampa Stadium: BIG SOMBRERO
Tiburon Sports Complex: JSHARKSFIN

MECHWARRIOR 2
Enter these at the PASSWORD screen:
Invincibility: ##XO/A~~UZ
Infinite Ammunition: TOXO/AX~TU
Access All Missions: T<XO/AXA<=
Extra Weapon Variants: T#XO/AX<<<
Use Any Mech: #OXO/A~~O/
Jump Jets for All Mechs: #YXO/A~YOL
Access "Elemental" Mech Chassis: T/XO/AZ~#*
Access "Tarantula" Mech Chassis: #/XO/A4~LY
"Cruise Control" Throttle: #AXO/A4YYA
Slow Heat Build-Up: #XXO/A4>Y+

MORTAL KOMBAT 3
Access Cheat Menu
Enter X, O, Δ, R1, R1, R2, R2, R1, R1 during the opening cinematics. Shao Kahn will say, "You will never win." if you enter the code fast enough. Press up on the KOMBAT block to access the cheat menu.

MORTAL KOMBAT MYTHOLOGIES: SUB-ZERO
Enter these codes, at the PASSWORD screen:
Infinite Lives: GTTBHR
10 Urns of Vitality: NXCVSE
End Credits: CRVDTS
Fatality: About one step back from fallen opponents, ⇨, ⇩, ⇨+ High Punch.
Stage Passwords:
Wind Stage: THWMSB
Earth Stage: CNSZDG
Prison Stage: RGTKCS
Water Stage: ZURKDM
Fire Stage: JYPPHD
Bridge of Immortality: QFTLWN
Qhan Chi's Fortress: ZCHRRY

NBA JAM EXTREME
After answering YES to KEEP RECORD?, enter any of these codes to access the playoffs:
Game 1 of semis: P, L, (backspace twice), A, Y, (backspace twice), O, F, (backspace twice), F, S, (backspace twice) then enter initials and date of your choice.
Game 4 of semis: C, H, (backspace twice), E, E, (backspace twice), S, Y, (backspace twice) then enter initials and date of your choice.
Game 1 of finals: F, I,(backspace twice), N, A, (Backspace twice), L, S, (backspace twice), then enter initials and date of your choice.
Game 5 of finals: N, O, (backspace twice), V, I, (backspace twice), C, E, (backspace twice), then enter initials and date of your choice.
Unlimited Turbo: Hold down TURBO, then press ⇧, ⇩, ⇧, ⇩ at the TONIGHTS GAME screen
Enter the following codes, at TIP OFF, before the ref throws up the ball: NOTE: All buttons are for default controls.
Soccer Ball Mode: Δ ,Δ, R1, R1, R2, R2, R2
Beach Ball Mode: Δ ,Δ, R1, R2, R1, Δ, Δ
Steal Mode: Δ ,Δ, Δ, R1, R1, R1, R2, R2, R2, Δ, Δ, Δ
Speed Mode: R2 (ten times), Δ ,Δ, Δ
Rainbow Mode: R1 (five times), Δ ,Δ, R1 (six times)

NFL GAMEDAY '98
The easter eggs that you get at the end of a season are as follows:
Super Kickers: BIG FOOT
Lenient Refs: BLIND REF
Tough Refs: BUSY REF
Equal Stats: EQUAL TEAMS
Fast Players: FIRE DRILL
Miniature Players: FLEA CIRCUS
Advance Difficulty: GD CHALLENGE
Better Recievers: GLOVES
Headless Players: HORSEMEN
Giant Players: HUMONGOUS
Amped Speed Burts: JUICE
Better Secondary: LEECH
Players are handless: LOOK MA
Loud Commentator: LOUD MOUTH
McMahon Mania: MCMAHON
Better jukes: NSE
Low Crowd Volume: QUIET CROWD
Increase Reciever Range: STRETCH
Loft Ball: THIN AIR
Drab Player Graphics: VIRTUAL POLYGONS
Dumb AI: WATERY AI

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB '97
Secret Teams
Enter L2, Δ, R2, R2, L2, R2 at the TEAM SELECT screen. Over 100 more teams will become available.

NHL 98
Enter these codes at the PASSWORD screen:
Big Heads: BRAINY
Big Players: BIBBIG
Small Players: NHLKIDS
Stanley Cup Victory Video: STANLLEY

NHL OPEN ICE
Play As Gordie Howe
Input the initials G_H and the date as March 31. Now the master of Old Time Hockey is yours.

NIGHTMARE CREATURES
Enter the code ⇦, ⇧, Δ, ⇩, O, Δ, □, ⇩ at the PASSWORD screen. When you start, you will have access to the cheat menu.

NUCLEAR STRIKE
Stage Passwords
Level 1: Delta: JUNGLEWAR
Level 2: Islant: CUTTHROATS
Level 3: Peace 1: COUNTDOWN
Level 4: Peace 2: PLUTONIUM
Level 5: DMZ: PUSAN
Level 6: Fortress: ARMAGEDDON
Bonus Level: Lightning: LIGHTNING

OGRE BATTLE
Secret Stage:
If you enter your name as "Fireseal", then when the game starts, you will be allocated a special army and be allowed to battle on the secret island of Dragon's Haven.

PROJECT: OVERKILL
Note: All cheats must be entered while game is paused and SOUND VOLUME is highlighted:
Cloak: (while pressing Δ) □, O, O, □, release Δ, (while pressing X) Δ, Δ, then release X.
Turbo: (while pressing ⇧) Δ, Δ, Δ, release ⇧, (while pressing ⇩) X, □, O, release ⇩.
Shield: (while pressing ⇨) O, □, Δ, release ⇨, (while pressing ⇦) □, O, X release X.
Max Life: (while pressing □) O, X, Δ, release □, (while pressing O) □, X, Δ, release □.
Max Ammo: (while pressing O) □, release O, (while pressing Δ) X, (while pressing O) X, release O, (while pressing X) □, release X.
Skip Level: X, ⇧, ⇩, ⇧, (while pressing □) O, release □, (while pressing X) Δ, release X.

RAGE RACER:
Mirror Mode: Hold down L1 + R1 + START (when at Car Select screen) until race starts.
Custom Color Change:
Hold down L1, L2, R1, R2 + SELECT while highlighting a color pallete. Now you can change the color.

RALLY CROSS
Cheat Codes
Enter code as season name:
Veteran Mode: vet me
Pro Level: im a pro
Access All: weeoo
No Collisions: banzai
Fat Tires: fat tires
90 degree turns: spinner
Invisible Car: wheels
Invisible Tires: no wheels
Nullify Viscous Effects: noviscous
Double Gravity: stone
1/2 Gravity: float
3/4 Gravity: feather

RELOADED:
Press pause and hold down the L1 and L2 until cursor freezes. Then enter code (while still pressing L1 and L2):
Health: ⇩, ⇨, ⇦, Δ, ⇨, ⇩
Ammo: Δ, ⇦, ⇦, ⇦, O, Δ, ⇩
Weapon Up: ⇦, ⇧, X, O
Skip Level: ⇦, Δ, X, ⇨, O, Δ, ⇩
Play as Fwak: (at player select) L1, O, R1, ⇩, ⇩, R1, O, L1, L1

ROBOTRON X:
Power-Up
Enter without pausing. Can be used up to five times per level.
Flame: ⇩, ⇨, ⇩, ⇨, O
Pulse: ⇧, O, ⇩, ⇨, □
Speed: ⇦, ⇦, ⇨, ⇨, Δ
Shield: ⇩, ⇦, □, O
2-Way Shot: ⇧, Δ, ⇧, Δ
3-Way Shot: ⇨, ⇨, □, X
4-Way Shot: ⇩, ⇩, ⇧, O

RUSH HOUR:
At the "Press Start" screen:
Bonus Track: X, ⇧, Δ, ⇩, R1, L1
Hidden Cars: ⇧, ⇦, ⇨, X, O, □
Reverse Track: ⇦, Δ, R1, O, L1, ⇩
Super Championship Race: ⇨, □, ⇦, O, ⇧, X

SOVIET STRIKE:
Level Codes:
Campaign 1: Crimea: WORSTCASE
Campaign 2: Black Sea: GRANDTHEFT
Campaign 3: Caspian: GROZNEY
Campaign 4: Dracula: CHERNOBYL
Campaign 5: Kremlin: CIVILWAR
Super Copter of Justice: THEBIGBOYS

STAR WARS: DARK FORCES
Utility Cheat:
Without pausing, enter ⇨, O, X, ⇨, O, X, ⇩, O, X

STAR WARS: MASTERS OF TERAS KASI
Secret Characters: To gain these secret characters, you must be playing with "Player Change At Continue" off.
Darth Vader:
Beat the game with Luke, on STANDARD, ARCADE, mode.
Stormtrooper:
Beat the game with Han, on STANDARD, ARCADE mode.
Slave Leia:
Beat the game with Leia, on STANDARD, ARCADE mode.
Jodo Kast: Beat seven or more characters in SURVIVAL mode.
Mara Jade: While in JEDI mode, hold L1 + R1 + L2 when entering TEAM mode. Then, beat all of the combatants.
Arena Select:
Beat the game, on STANDARD, ARCADE mode with Chewie.

STAR WARS: REBEL ASSAULT II
Enter these codes at PASSCODE screen for access to all stages.
Easy Difficulty: X, O, X, O, X, Δ
Medium Difficulty: X, X, Δ, O, X, Δ
Hard Difficulty: Δ, □, □, □, X, Δ

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA:
Secret Characters:
Press the buttons while "?" is highlighted (default controls)
M.Bison (player 1): While holding L2, press ⇦, ⇦, ⇩, ⇩, ⇦, ⇩, ⇩, □+Δ
M.Bison (player 2): While holding L2, press ⇨, ⇨, ⇩, ⇩, ⇨, ⇩, ⇩, □+Δ
Akuma (player 1): While holding L2, press ⇦, ⇦, ⇩, ⇩, ⇩, □+Δ
Akuma (player 2): While holding L2, press ⇨, ⇨, ⇨, ⇩, ⇩, ⇩, □+Δ
Dan: (1 and 2 player): While holding L2 and R2, press Δ, □, X, O, Δ

STREET FIGHTER EX PLUS ALPHA
Secret Characters
Highlight PRACTICE at MODE SELECT screen.
Press SELECT, ⇧, ⇨, ⇩, ⇨, SELECT
Bonus Game:
Highlight PRACTICE at MODE SELECT screen. Press SELECT, ⇧, ⇧, ⇨, ⇧, ⇨, ⇧, SELECT.

TEMPEST X3
Access All Cheats:
At any time, press L1, R1, Δ, O, START, SELECT, ⇘. Now you can perform any of the following:
A.I. Droid: R1 + L2 + Δ + X + ⇩
Level Skip: While holding R1, press L1 and Superzapper
Acid Mode: L2+R2+Δ+X+⇧
Extra Modes:
Score more than 500,000 points. Enter H_V_S at 5-initial name slot. Save game. Now you have access to Tempest 2000 and Tempest Plus modes.

TIME COMMANDO
Max Energy:
Pause game and highlight SOUND FX. Press
X, Δ, Δ, O, X, Δ, Δ, O, □, □, X

TOMB RAIDER
Level Skip:
While in INVENTORY, press L2, R2, L1, O, Δ, L1, R2, L2.
Access All Weapons:
While in INVENTORY, press L1, Δ, R2, L2, L2, R2, O, L1

TOMB RAIDER 2
"Bombshell" Laura:
With the R1 button, have Laura step forward, step back, do three 360 turns and jump backwards. Watch Lara become a *literal* bombshell.
Level Skip:
With the R2 button, have Laura step left, then right, then left. Now, using the R1 button, walk her backwards, then forwards, then do three 360 turns. Finish up with a jump forward, performing the ROLL function in mid air. She should freeze in mid-air, taking you to the next level.
Access All Weapons:
With the R2 button, move left, then right, then left. Now, using the R1 button, walk her backward, then forwards and then do three 360 turns, finishing off with a backward jump.
Execute a ROLL in mid air.

TREASURES OF THE DEEP:
While paused, enter any code.
Maximum Continues: ⇩, X, ⇦, □,⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, R2, R2, R2, L2, L2, L2
Infinite Health: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧,⇧, Δ ,Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, Δ ,Δ, X, X
Max Air & Health: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, ⇧, ⇩, ⇨, ⇨, X, X
Infinite Air: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧,⇧, Δ ,Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, Δ , O, X, □, ⇧, ⇨, ⇩, ⇦
Turbo: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, R1, R2, R1, R2, R1, R2
All Equipment: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧,⇧, Δ ,Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, L1,L1, L1, L1, R1, R1, R1, R1, L1, L1, L1, L1, R1, R1, R1, R1
All Weapons: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧,⇧, Δ ,Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, R1, R1, R1, R1, L1, L1, L1, L1, R1, R1, R1, R1, L1, L1, L1, L1
Unlimited Payload: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧,⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, Δ, ⇧, X, ⇩
Two Million Gold: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, R1, R2, L1, L2, R1, R2, L1, L2
Reveal Map: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, □, X, O, X, □
No Fines: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ ,Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, R2, R1, L2, L1
Open Doors: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, X, O, Δ, □
Complete Stage: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, Δ, Δ, Δ, ⇩, ⇩, ⇩
Complete All Stages: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧,⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, □, X, X, X, □, Δ, Δ, Δ, □, X, X, X
Access All Stages: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, ⇩, ⇨, ⇧, ⇦, Δ, X
Disable Currents: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, R1, L1, L2, R2, X
Retrieve Atlantis Piece: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, L1, L2, L1, L2 , □, O
Overhead View: ⇩, X, ⇦, □, ⇧, ⇧, Δ, Δ, ⇨, ⇨, O, O, Δ, □, X, □

Saturn Codes

ALIEN TRILOGY
Cheat Codes
Go to the password screen and enter to following codes:
Invincibility: FVNKYG1BBON
All weapons: F1SH1NGFORGVNS
Infinite ammunition: F1LLMYPOCK1TS

ASTAL
Restore Energy
Pause the game and press down, R shift, up, L shift, X, A, Y, B, Z, C, Right, and Left.
Invincibility
Pause the game press up, Y, left, A, down, B, right, C.
Secret Mode
Go to the Options menu and press left, right, left, right, up, down, L shift, R shift, and START on Controller 2. The words Secret Mode will appear at the top of the screen. Highlight the "Lives" option and press right to increase the number of extra lives.
Stage Select
Once the Secret Code is in place, go to the Title screen and press up, down, left, right, L shift, R shift, A, Y, C, Z, B, and X on Controller 1. A Stage Select option will appear.

BATTLE ARENA TOSHINDEN REMIX
Select Gaia, Sho and Cupido: Go to the Start/Options screen and press up, down, X, B, A, Y, C, Z, and START. Gaia and Sho will be available to select on the character select screen. Highlight Sho and hold up on the D-pad to select Cupido.

BLACKFIRE
Infinite weapons and fuel
At the Title screen press L shift, A, Z, Y, A, down, down. Start a game and at any time you're running low on ammo or fuel, pause and unpause the game for a full refill.
Invincibility
At the Title screen press and hold A, then B, then C, then release C, then B, then A. Next, press B, A, B, Y, hold X, press Up, then press and hold Down and release X.
Stage Skip
At the title screen press and hold C, then B, then A, then Up, then L shift. Next, release A, then C, then L shift, then Up. Use the following commands below to go up or down a level:
Skip ahead one level: Hold A, B, C and Up and press L.
Skip back one level: Hold X, Y, Z and Up and press L.

BUBBLE BOBBLE
(featuring Rainbow Islands)
Stage Skip
Choose "Bubble Bobble" from the main menu, then press down, up, down, up, right, down, left, down, up, and down. Skip levels by pressing the R shift, and go back down one by pressing L shift.

BUG TOO!
Flying Mode
During gameplay, pause the game and press L shift, A, left, L shift, right, down, down and unpause. Press and hold Y to make your character fly.
Invincibility
During gameplay, pause the game and press R shift, right, A, L shift, right, A, down, Y and unpause.
Cheat Menu
During gameplay, pause the game and press L shift, A, Z, Y, left, right, A, down, right, L shift. A menu will appear, allowing you to switch characters, access a Sound test, turn the flying cheat on, and a level select.

CHRISTMAS NIGHTS
Date and Time Codes
Christmas Nights has date and time release options. Change your date and time on your Saturn to access the following options:
Enter dates in December or January to play in the snow with a Christmas theme.
Enter dates from other months of the year to play with the standard NiGHTS settings.
Enter the date April 1 (April Fool's) to play as Reala.
9:00 AM the snow changes to crescent moons.
12:00 PM the snow changes to purple gems.
3:00 PM the snow changes to candy.
9:00 PM the snow changes to stars.
12:00 AM the snow changes to hearts.

COMMAND & CONQUER
Power-Up Codes:
At any time during the game, press START to pause, then enter one of the following codes. When you press START again to unpause, you will have access to the feature you requested as follows:
Nuclear Strike: A, B, C, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, A
Ion Cannon--A, B, C, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, B
Air Strike--A, B, C, Left, Down, Right, Up, Left, Down, Right, Up, C
Extra $5,000--Right, Left, A, B, C, Z, Y, X, Right, Left
Reveal Entire Map--Up, Down, Right, Left, A, Up, Down, Right, Left, A

CRIME WAVE
Stage Select
When the "Identify Player" screen comes up at the start of the game, choose "New Player" and enter "JAW" as your initials. When the "Select Zone" menu appears, you'll be able to choose any stage.
Vertical Screen
At any time during game play, hold L + Y and press X to rotate the screen 90° from its standard horizontal position, or hold L + Y and press Z to go clockwise. Now you can play the game if you turn your TV set on its side—which is something that many TV and monitor manufacturers do not recommend, unfortunately. To return to the normal horizontal screen, hold L + Y and press B.

DARIUS GAIDEN
Extra Credits
At the "Game Start/Option" screen, press X, A L, R, Left, then hold L and press X, C, Z, A, Right, Right. You'll hear a sound to confirm the code. Now start the game and you'll find that booth players have nine continue credits instead of the usual three.
Mega Fire
Also at the "Game Start/Option" screen, hold B, then press Y, Right, Left, X, Z, L, R. You'll hear an explosion to confirm the code. Now start the game and hold the fire button for super rapid-fire.
Extra Difficulty Settings
Again, at the "Game Start/Option" screen, hold X, then press Z, C, L, B, Left, R, L. You'll hear a sound to confirm the code. Now enter the Option menu to find two new difficulty settings "Very Easy" and the extremely difficult "Abnormal."

DAYTONA USA
Jeffrey's Dance
On the expert track, as you appproach the Jeffrey statue, push the X button repeatedly to make the Jeffrey statue rootate and stand on his head.
Mirror Mode
In "Saturn Mode," if you hold START while making your choice at the "Select Your Track" screen, you can race the courses in reverse.
Time Trial
In "Saturn Mode," if you hold START while making your choice at the "Select Your Car" screen, you can race in time trials by yourself.
Extra Cars.
At the title screen, while the words "PRESS START BUTTON" are flashing, point the D-pad diagonally in the Down/Right position and hold the L, R, C and Y buttons. With all of these buttons held, press START. At the next menu, release the buttons and choose Saturn Mode. Now you have six new cars to race with, a total of 10 available vehicles.
Secret Horse Trick
At the title screen, point the D-pad diagonally in the Up/Left position, hold the X, Z, A and B buttons and press START. At the next menu, release the buttons and choose Saturn Mode. Now you can play as the brown (automatic) or gray (manual) horse.
Baby Horses
Choose a horse and race the Beginner track in Endurance mode. If you win, you'll earn two more "vehicles" called "Horse 2," horses that are being followed by baby horses.
Hidden Music
Buried deep within the data of the Daytona CD are excerpts of 73 different songs from Sega games of the past and present. To hear them, you must earn a score that's high enough to put your initials on the high score table. Once you're there, enter the initials as shown to hear different tunes:
A.B: Main theme from After Burner
KAG: "Maximum Power" from After Burner

EARTHWORM JIM 2
During gameplay, pause the game and enter the following commands:

Refill Ammo - A, up, down, right, right, left, X, and C
Refill Energy - left, A, Z, Y, down, A, Y, and down
Nine Lives - Y, A, right, down, down, A, left, and right
Homing Missile Gun - Y, A, up, X, C, left, Y, and up
Mega Plasma Gun - C, A, right, right, up, down, up, and left

FIGHTER'S MEGAMIX
Options Plus Menu
Play the game 500 times (not in one sitting) and "Options Plus" will be available, where you can select stages, select no damage, and choose caged or non-caged arenas.
Play as Palm Tree
To play the palm tree for the AM2 logo, play the game for 84 hours and then choose Kumachan with the Z button.
Play as Niku (Meat)
To play as Niku, turn on the Saturn 30 times (only has to be done once). Start a game with Kumachan and press X to select him.

GUARDIAN HEROES
Debug Menu
At the Start/Options screen, select Options, and highlight "Exit." While highlighting "Exit" hold down X, B and Z. While holding these buttons down, press and hold down, and when the option "DIP Switch" is highlighted, quickly press the A button. Once done, you'll be able to access a Debug Menu, where you can see all the different endings, stage-select, all the characters selectable in Battle Mode, and many other options

LAST BRONX
Strange Extra Options
First beat the game in Arcade mode on Arcade difficulty without losing a round and continuing. Then, enter the following at the character select screen:
For Lisa, Zaimoku, Nagi, Yusaku, an Red Eye, highlight the character and hold left and press A or C.
For Tommy, Joe, Yoko, Kurosawa, or Red Eye, highlight the character, and hold right and press A or C.
Extra Difficulty
Load a saved game off your Saturn 15 or more times, and a new diffculty setting menu will be shown.

LEGEND OF OASIS
2 Player Mode
During gameplay, press Z and hold L shift and press X. A clone Leon will appear controlled by Player 2. Note that you have to find a place with no enemies to perform this trick.

MADDEN NFL 97
Secret Teams
Select "Exhibition" and select your team. At the User Records screen, enter the name "TIBURON" and press C. Return back to the Team Select screen, where you'll find eight new teams.

MANX TT SUPERBIKE
Secret Bikes
Select Arcade Mode and when the Transmission Select screen appears, press Y and let the timer run out. When the race starts, you'll be racing a new bike.
Sheep Mode
Start any game and at the Transmission Select screen, press up, up, down, down, left, right, Z, and Y. Once done, start a race and all the racers will be riding sheep.

MARVEL SUPER HEROES
Boss Codes
To play both Dr. Doom or Thanos, beat the game on any difficulty and at the character select screen:
Dr. Doom - press down, down, and press and hold A, then B, then C.
Thanos - press up, up, then press and hold Z, then, Y, then X.

MEGAMAN 8
Animation Sequences
At the main menu scren, highlight "Bonus Mode" hold the L shift and R shift, and press Start. You will see a new option called "Animation."

MEGAMAN X4
Alternate MegamanX and Zero
At the character select screen, highlight Megaman X and press B twice, left six times, then hold L and R shift, and press Start. To play as Black Zero, highlight Zero, hold the R shift, press right six times, release R shift, hold B and press Start.

NIGHTWARRIORS: DARKSTALKERS REVENGE
Extra Turbo Speed and Secret Menu:
At the Options menu, highlight "Turbo Speed" and press X, X, right, A, and Z for up to eight stars of Turbo Speed.

For the Secret Menu, Go to the Options menu, highlight "Configuration" and press B, X, down, A, and Y quickly. A new feature called "Appendix" will appear at the bottom where you can access a BGM Test, a Full Animation setting, alter the background scenery, and other cool options.

PANZER DRAGOON
Space Harrier Mode
Access the CD Menu of the Saturn system (either by putting nothing in the disc or hold the L + R when the Saturn starts up). Choose "System Settings" and choose German for "Languages." Start the game up and press Start at the title screen, then press X, right, X, down, X, left, X, up, X, and Z.
Invincibility
Go to the Start/Options screen and press L shift, L shift, R shift, R shift, up, down, left, and right.
Infinite Continues
At the Start/Options screen, press up, X, right, Y, down, Z, left, Y, up, and X.
Stage Select Menu
Go to the Start/Options screen and press up, up, down, down, left, right, left, right, X, Y, and Z.
Weapon Power-Ups
Go into the Options Menu and press up, X, right, Y, down, Z, left, Y, up, and X. To access the weapon power-ups, hold down the following buttons at the Episode screen:
A or X - normal weapon
Y - multi shot
Z - wide shot
B - red lasers
C - sidewinders

RESIDENT EVIL
Battle Mode
On the title screen, press and hold X, Y, Z, and press Start on Controller 2.

Alternate Uniforms
Start a new game and when the introduction starts, hold the L and R shift buttons on Controller 2 until you start your game.

SATURN BOMBERMAN
Secret Characters
To access the secret character Manto and Yuna, select Battle Mode then press and hold L and R shift buttons. Both characters will be selectable in Battle Mode.
Change Time and Levels
In Battle Mode, at the Stage Select screen, hold down X + Y + Z. You can change the time of each stage from dawn till dusk by press up or down on the stage select screen. This will also change the arena itself.

SEGA RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP
Secret Course and Car
Hold down the X and Y button at the main menu screen and choose a mode to race in. You can access the difficult Lakeside course.
To get the Lancia Stratos, at the main menu screen, press X, Y, Z, Y, and X.

SHINOBI LEGIONS
99 lives
At the Start/Options screen, highlight "Game Start" and press A, Z, B, Y, C, X, and Start.
Stage Select
During gameplay, pause the game and press A, B, A, B, and C. You should see a number in the lower left corner, and you can change the number by pressing left or right, which in turn, select different stages in the game.
999 Shurikens
On the Options screen, highlight Shurikens, and hold L and R shift buttons while pressing C, A, and B.

SONIC 3D BLAST
Cheat Codes
On the title screen, hold down C and press Start. Now, start a game, pause the game, and press the following buttons:
A -Skips one level
B - Skip ahead 3 levels
C - Skip to Panic Puppet, Act 3
X - Adds an extra life
Y - Adds one medal
Z - Receives all Chaos Gems

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA
Tag Team Bison
At the main menu, select "Arcade" and have two players join in. Player 1 must highlight Ryu, hold the L and R shift buttons, press up, up, release the L and R shifts, press up, up, and then press Jab punch. Player 2 must highlight Ken, hold the L and R shift buttons, press up, up, release the L and R shifts, press up, up and press Fierce punch. If done properly, M.Bison will appear and both of you will be able to fight him.
Secret Characters
Highlight the "?" and enter the following codes to access the secret characters:
M.Bison - Hold the L shift and press left, left, down, down, left, down, down, then X and Y simultaneously.
Akuma - Hold the L shift and press left, left, left, down, down, down, then X and Y simultaneously.

STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 2
Classic Chun Li
At the default character select screen, highlight Chun Li, press and hold Start for about 2 seconds, then press any button. You'll play the classic Chun Li from Street Fighter 2 Championship Edition with all her moves.
Classic Zangief
At the default character select screen, highlight Zangief, press and hold Start, release the Start button, then move the cursor in these series of motions: down, left, left, left, left, up, up, right, right, right, right, down, then choose Zangief.
Classic Dhalsim
At the default character select screen, highlight Dhalsim, press and hold Start, release the Start button, then move the cursor in this sequence:
left, down, right, up and then choose Dhalsim.
Evil Ryu
To select Evil Ryu, at the default character select screen, highlight Ryu, press and hold Start, release the Start button, the move the cursor in this sequence: right, up, down, left, then select Ryu
Shin Akuma
To use the ultimate Akuma, at the default character select screen, highlight Akuma, press and hold Start, release the Start button, then move the cursor in these series of motions: down, down, right, down, right, down, down, down, left, down, left, down, the select Akuma.

SUPER PUZZLE FIGHTER 2 TURBO
Secret Characters
On the character select screen, enter the following commands for the secret puzzlers:
Hsien Ko's Sister - Highlight Morrigan, hold Start, press right, then A
Akuma - Highlight Morrigan, hold Start, press down, down, down, left, left, left then A.
Dan - Highlight Morrigan, hold Start, press left, left, left, down, down ,down then A.
Anita - Highlight Morrigan, hold Start, press right, right the A.
Devilot - Highlight Morrigan, hold Start, press left, left, left, down, down, down, wait till the timer is at the 10 seconds, then press A.

THREE DIRTY DWARVES
Skip Stages
In the Options menu, press L and R shifts where a password screen will appear. Enter the code "MOSHOLU" and a stage select will appear as a new option.

TOMB RAIDER
Stage Skip
During gameplay, pause the game, and turn to the last page of the passport. Press Z, Y, Z, Y, X, X, X, and Start. Once done, press A and you'll skip to the next level.

VIRTUA COP 2
Character Select
When the stage select screen appears, hold the correponding buttons down to choose your character:
X - Rage
Y - Smarty
Z - Janet
Secret Menu Code
For this code to work, you have to have a gun peripheral in Controller port 1 and

a regular controller in Controller port 2. When the title screen appears, press up, down, up, down, A, X, B, Y, C, and Z. You now have access to a secret menu.

VIRTUA FIGHTER
Play as Dural
At the character select screen, press down, up, right, then A + left. You'll be able to play the boss.
Stage Select
At the title screen, press up 12 times, then press Start. Go to Options, and scroll all the down, where a hidden stage select menu will be found.
Ranking Mode
To access Ranking Mode, at the title screen, hold down/right, C, Y, L shift, R shift, and press Start.

VIRTUA FIGHTER 2
Play Dural
To play the boss in the sequel, highlight Akira and press down, up right, then A + left.

VIRTUAL ON
Play Jaguarandi
To play the mid-boss character, at the title screen, hold down and press L + R shifts simultaneously. Jaguarandi should be just to the right of Raiden.
Prototype Raiden and Temjin
To play special versions of these two robots, at the title screen, hold up and press L + R shifts simultaneously. Both do slightly more damage than the original versions.
Pick-up
After beating the game, when the credits are rolling and when you first see Earth, start moving the controller in different motions. You may stop when you see the U.S. Sega credits roll, and a small ship will pick up your damaged robot from space.

Nintendo 64 Codes

BOMBERMAN 64
Secret Stages
At the main menu screen, press the START button repeatedly and quickly. Once done, you'll have four new arenas in Battle Mode.

DIDDY KONG RACING
Magic Codes
On the options menu screen, select "Magic Codes" and enter the following for some cool effects:
ARNOLD - Big Characters
TEENYWEENIES - Small Characters
JUKEBOX - Music Menu
FREEFRUIT - 10 Bananas
FREEFORFALL - Max. Power Up
BOGUSBANANAS - Bananas Reduce Speed
ROCKETFUEL - All Balloons Are Turbo
OFFROAD - Better Traction
BLABBERMOUTH - Horn Cheat
VITAMINB - Unlimited Bananas
BOMBS AWAY - All Balloons Are Missiles
DOUBLEVISION - Same Character Select

DOOM 64
Ultimate Password
At the Password Screen, enter the following to start the game with all weapons, invulnerability, and stage skip: ?TJL BDFW BFGB JVVB

DUKE NUKEM 64
Cheat Menu
On the Main Menu screen, press ⇦, ⇦, L, L, ⇨, ⇨, ⇦, ⇦. A cheat menu will appear. In the cheat menu, enter the following codes to unlock the hidden objects:
Invincibility - press the R button seven times, then press ⇦
Monsters - press L, C←, ⇦, R, C→, ⇨, ⇦, ⇦
All Items - press R, C→, ⇨, L, C←, ⇦, C→, ⇨
Level Select - press L, L, L, C→, ⇨, ⇦, ⇦, C←

EXTREME G
Gameplay Codes
When picking your vehicle, press R, select the Name Option, and enter the following codewords:
ANTIGRAV - Race Course Upside Down
ARSENAL - Unlimited Weapons
NITROID - Inifinite Nitros
ROLLER - All Vehicles on Track Turn Into Boulders
STEALTH - Invisible Vehicles
XTREME - Increases Top Speed

HEXEN
Secret Menu
Pause the game, and quickly press C↑, C↓, C←, C→. A cheat menu will appear. Access the cheat menu and enter the following codes:
God Mode - C←, C→, C↓
Phase Form - Press C↑ 20 times then C↓
Stage Select - C←, C←, C→, C→, C↓, C↑
Collect All Artifacts - C↑, C→, C↓, C↑
Collect All Weapons - C→, C↑, C↓, C↓

INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER 64
Big Head Mode - At the title screen, press C↑, C↑, C↓, C↓, C←, C→, C←, C→, B, A, then Hold Z + Press START.
Secret Teams - At the title screen, press ⇧, L, ⇧, L, ⇩, L, ⇩, L, ⇦, R, ⇨, R, ⇦, R, ⇨, R, B, A, then Hold Z + Press START.

KILLER INSTINCT GOLD
Boss Code - When a character biography demo appears, press Z, A, R, Z, A, B. Gargos will be playable.
Bonus Options - When a character biography demo shows, press Z, B, A, Z, A, L. This will enable special character colors and three extra levels.
Secret Stage - When choosing characters in 2 Player Mode, hold ⇩ and press C↓ then you'll fight in a secret sky stage.

MADDEN FOOTBALL 64
Secret Team - Access the Create Player Option and enter the name "TIBURON," continue and select Save and Exit. When you start a game, all your players will stand 8'4" and have 100 in all their attributes.

MARIO KART 64
Reverse Tracks - Earn the gold trophy in all four cups in Mario GP 150cc Mode, and you can race all 16 courses in reverse.

MORTAL KOMBAT TRILOGY
Play as Khameleon

When the "story" screens appear in the demo, input C⊃, C∩, A, B, CU, C∩, C⊃. Shao Kahn will say, "Khameleon," and he will now be selectable.
Play as Motaro
Choose any character, hold High Kick + Low Kick and hold the D-pad away from your opponent before the battle begins. When the fight starts, you'll change into Motaro. This only works on specific stages like Jade's Desert and the Wasteland.
Play as Shao Kahn
Choose any character, hold High Punch + Low Punch and hold the D-pad ⇩ before the battle begins. When the fight starts, you'll change into Shao Kahn. This only works on specific stages like the Rooftop and the Pit.
Hidden Game #1
After playing 50 straight games in two-player mode, you'll play a game of Pong.
Hidden Game #2
After playing 100 straight games in two-player mode, you'll play a game of Galaxian.
Hidden Game #3
After playing 150 straight games in two-player mode, you'll play a game of Space Invaders. Or, when you're on The Pit stage, watch the moon in the background. When you see a shadow fly across it, press the Z button; the winner of that match will play Space Invaders.
Stage Select
At the character-select screen, highlight Sonya, hold ⇧ and press Start. You'll be able to choose the stage before the fight.
Super Hard Mode
At the character-select screen, highlight Kano, hold ⇩ and press Start. The "Choose Your Destiny" paths will be much harder now.
Free Play
When the "story" screens appear in the demo, input ⇩, ⇩, ⇧, ⇧, ⇨, ⇨, ⇦, ⇦ on the D-pad.
"More Kombat" menu
When the "story" screens appear in the demo, input CU, B, A (Run, High Punch, Low Punch). Press Start to access the Kombat menu, then hold Up and press Start. When the main menu appears, you'll find a new option with a blue question mark; you can now select your stage, disable throws, have infinite "run" meters, turn on "Bloody Kombat" and activate the two secret characters, Human Smoke and Khameleon.
"Kombat Cheats" Menu
When the "story" screens appear in the demo, input C∩, C⊃, CU, A, B, B, B, A, A (High Kick, Low Kick, Run, Low Punch, High Punch, High Punch, High Punch, Low Punch, Low Punch). Press Start to access the Kombat menu, then hold Up and press Start. When the main menu appears, you'll find a new option with a red question mark; you can now activate Free Play mode, have no time limit for fatalities, set one-round matches, or view collision boxes.

NBA HANGTIME
Vs. Codes
At the "Tonight's Matchup" screen while the announcer is naming the two teams, input:
Disable all Computer Assistance - Hold ⇨, press Pass, Pass
Big Head - Hold ⇧, press Turbo + Pass simultaneously
Rooftop Court - Hold ⇦, press Turbo, Turbo,
ABA Ball - Hold ⇨, press Shoot, Turbo, Pass
At the "Tonight's Matchup" screen use the Turbo, Shoot, and Pass buttons to change the numbers in the box at the bottom of the screen.
Tiny Players - 025
Silence Music - 048
Tournament Mode - 111
Zip Passes - 120
Max. Speed - 284
No Shoving - 390
Unlimited Turbo - 461
Super Speed - 552
Max. Blocking - 616
Quick Hands -709
Max. Power - 802
Allow Goaltending - 9937
Secret Characters
Enter the corresponding name and numbers:
AHRDWY 0000 - Hardaway
AMRICH 2020 - Amrich
BARDO 6000 - Bardo
CARLOS 1010 - Pesina
CLIFFR 0000 - C. Robinson
DANIEL 0604 - Thompson
DANR 0000 - Roan
DAVIDR 0000 - D. Robinson
DIVITA 0201 - Divita
DREAM 0000 - Olajuwon
EDDIE 6213 - Ferrier
ELLIOT 0000 - Ellliot
EUGENE 6767 - Geer
EWING 0000 - Ewing
GHILL 0000 - Hill
GLENNR 0000 - G. Robinson
HGRANT 0000 - Grant
JAMIE 1000 or MUNDAY 5432 - Rivitt
JAPPLE 6660 - Japple
JASON 0729 - Skiles
JC 0000 - Carlton
JFER 0503 - Hedrick
JONHEY 6000 - Hey
JOHNSN 0000 - Johnson
KEMP 0000 - Kemp
KIDD 0000 - Kidd
KOMBAT 0004 - Boon
MALONE 0000 - Malone
MARTY 1010 - Martinez
MEDNIK 6000 - Mednick
MILLER 0000 - Miller
MINIFE 6000 - Minifee
MORRIS 6000 - Morris
MORTAL 0004 - Tobias
MOTUMB 0000 - Mutombo
MURSAN 0000 - Muresan
MXY 1014 - Vinikour
NICK 7000 - Ehrlich
PATF 2000 - Fitzgerald
PERRY 3500 - Perry
PIPPEN 0000 - Pippen
QUIN 0330 - Quinn
RICE 0000 - Rice
RODMAN 0000 - Rodman
ROOT 6000 - Root
SHAWN 0123 - Liptak
SMITS 0000 - Smits
SNO 0103 - Oursler
STACKH 0000 - Stackhouse
STARKS 0000 - Starks
TURMEL 0322 - Turmell
WEBB 0000 - Webb
WEBBER 0000 - Webber
NFUNK 0101 - Funk
MOURNING 0000 - Mourning

NFL QUARTERBACK CLUB 98
TGHTGRP - No turnovers
SMLMDGT - Tiny players
GLYTHMD - Giant players
STNTXTM - NFC, AFC, Acclaim, and Iguana Teams Available
DWNDRV - Eight downs

SAN FRANCISCO RUSH
Alter Gravity - hold Z and press ⇧, ⇩ then release Z and press ⇧, ⇩, ⇧, ⇩

STAR WARS: SHADOWS OF THE EMPIRE
X-Wing or Tie Fighter
Play the Skyhook Battle stage until you reach Skyhook station. When you've got the Outrider, shift the camera until you're behind it. Then, press Start, then hold ⇦ + L + R + Z + C⊂, + C⊃, +C∪; while holding these buttons, move Up or Down on the D-pad to select either an X-Wing or Tie Fighter.
See the Ending
Enter your name as "_Credits" When you start the game, you'll go directly to the end.

SUPER MARIO 64
Cinema Camera Change
Have a second controller plugged in when you defeat Bowser. When Mario flies off, use the analog on Controller 2 to change the camera angle.

TETRISPHERE
Stage Select
Select "Single" from the main menu, then "New Name." Hold C⊃, + C∪, and press the L button; the numbers on the menu will change to different characters. Using these new characters, enter the following: Saturn, Flying Saucer, Rocketship, Heart, Skull. Now select "Start" and enter either the "Rescue," "Hide + Seek," or "Puzzle" game modes.
Gameboy Music
Select "Single" from the main menu, then "New Name." Hold C⊃, + C∪, and press the L button; Enter the name "GaMEBOY" but substitute the alien head with the letter "a." Now go to the Audio options to listen to the ten secret music tracks.

TOP GEAR RALLY
Cheat Codes
Enter at any time:
All cars - A, ⇦, ⇦, C∪, A, ⇨, Z
Access All Tracks - A, ⇦, ⇦, ⇨, ⇩, Z
Helmet Car - ⇧, ⇧, Z, B, A, ⇦, ⇦
Ice Cube Car - C∪, ⇧, B, ⇨,A, C∪, A, ⇨
Beach Ball Car - B, B, A, ⇦, ⇦, C∪, A, ⇨

TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER
Cheat Codes
NTHGTHDGDCRTDTRK - activates all cheats and lets you warp to any stage.
RBNSMTH - Invincibility
CMGTSMMGGTS - All Weapons
BLLTSRRFRND - Infinite Ammo
FRTHSTHTTRLSCK--Infinite Lives
THSSLKSCL - Spirit Mode
GRGCHN - Big Head Mode
DNCHN - Tiny Enemies
DLKTDR - Pen and Ink Mode
CLLTHTNMTN - Quack Mode
FDTHMGS - View Credits

WAR GODS
Fatalities
Ahua Kin - Close, 3D, ⇧, ⇩, ⇧, + High Punch + Low Kick
Anubis - 3D, ⇨, ⇘, ⇩, ⇙, ⇦, + High Punch + Low Kick
CY-5 - Midscreen distance, ⇦, ⇦, + High Punch
Kabuki Jo - Sweep distance, ⇦, ⇙, ⇩, ⇘, ⇨, + Low Kick + High Kick
Maximus - 3D, + ⇨, ⇨, + High Punch + Low Punch
Pagan - Midscreen distance, ⇦, ⇨, + Low Punch
Tak - ⇦, ⇙, ⇩,⇘, ⇨, + Low Punch + High Kick
Vallah - Close, ⇨, ⇨, + Low Kick
Voodoo - Midscreen distance, ⇦, ⇨, + Low Punch
Warhead - Far, 3D, ⇨, ⇘, ⇩, ⇙, ⇦
Play Grox
At the character-select screen, quickly press ⇩, ⇨, ⇦, ⇦, ⇧, ⇩, ⇨, ⇧, ⇦, ⇦ then select your character.
Free Play
At the first War Gods title screen, press C⊂, C⊂, ⇨, A, B, C∩, C⊃. Go to the Options menu and next to "Continues" will be the option "Free Play."
Cheat Menu
At the first War Gods title screen, press ⇨, ⇨, ⇨, B, B, A, A. Go to the Options menu, and the "Cheat Menu" will be available

WAVE RACE 64
Ride the Dolphin
Pick Stunt Mode and the Dolphin Park course. Perform all the possible stunts (handstand, ride backwards, stand up, somersault, vertical flip off a ramp, barrel roll a ramp clockwise and counter-clockwise, and submarine dive off a ramp), go through all the rings, and finish the course before the times expires. Then go to the main menu, pick Championship mode and select "Warm Up." When the Watercraft Select menu appears, highlight your character, hold the analog ⇩ and pick your character.

WAYNE GRETZKY'S 3D HOCKEY
Gretzky Quick Start
To quickly start a game, hold any button except A at the main menu and press START.
Select Opposing Team
When going up against the computer, go to the "Select Your Team" menu, highlight the team you wish to play against and press C⊃ 3 times.
Trade Players
At the Options screen, hold the L button and press C∪, C∪, C∩, C∩, C∪, C∪, C⊃, C⊃, C∪; the eighth digit of the "Specials" option will be changed to "1." Now go to the main menu, choose "Records" and pick "Team Stats." When the team stats appear, press C∩ ten times. A "Modify Teams" menu will appear. Choose two teams to modify, then press A. The roster of the first team will be on the left; press B to change the team on the right. Go ⇧ or ⇩ to select the player you want to replace, go ⇦ or ⇨ to select his replacement. Press A to complete the substitution. Press START to modify the second team, then press START again when you're finished.
Frequent Fight Mode
At the Options screen, hold the L button and press C∩, C∩, C∪, C⊂, C⊃, C⊃, C⊂, C⊃, C⊂. Now fights will occur every 20 seconds if you're playing in "Arcade" mode with fighting "on." This code must be reinput every period.
Super Teams
At the Options screen, hold the L button and press C⊃, C⊂, C⊂, C⊃, C⊂, C⊂, C⊃, C⊂, C⊂. You can now play the USA, Canada, Williams Entertainment, and 99ers teams.

riot TOY FAIR 2

Welcome to the second installment of our look at the amazing 1998 Toy Fair, straight from the showroom floors in New York to you. We continue our look this month at some of the hottest new toys coming at you this year from the companies that have proven success in the action figure and toy field. This time, we take you through the new lines from Hasbro/Kenner, Playmates, and Mattel, and you can bet all three of these companies have plenty coming your way—so pay attention!

HASBRO/KENNER

The Hasbro/Kenner showroom is much like a gigantic maze, with rooms branching off in every direction, separating the company's many toy divisions. In the middle of it all is a massive track on which a Hasbro pro toy player (Ed's Note: And I thought I had it good) is seen operating one of their new remote-controlled cars for all to see. We focus our efforts on the action figure department, where first up is a step inside a room resembling the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon. It's time to look at Star Wars. In short: Look for over 100 new figures this year. Look for figures that are completely new to the line, having never appeared in the highly collectible original line. Look for figures based on the popular Star Wars novels. Kenner's plans for Star Wars are truly mammoth, with so many new figures due out this year, it's hard to know what to list. Some of the more interesting pieces to watch for include Lobot, Mon Mothma, Clone Emperor, Leia in Black Cloak, Mara





Jade, Darktrooper, Ree-Yees, Zuckuss, Ishi Tib, and the long-awaited Darth Vader with removable helmet. Plus, there will be plenty of new multi-packs in the Cinema Scenes collection, including Mynock Hunt (with Han, Leia, and Chewbacca), Jabba's Dancers, and more. No word on new exclusives, but we're guessing there's sure to be more, as they were so popular last year. One special set many collectors haven't heard about is the Star Wars Millennium Falcon Interactive Playset, which fits right on top of a computer keyboard. You control the cockpit as the screen shows your flight. Best of all, the set comes with its own Han Solo. And don't forget about new 12" figures, including Han in Hoth Gear, Chained Chewbacca, Emperor Palpatine, Luke in Jedi Gear, and more. No photos of those new 12" figures yet, as Kenner is still







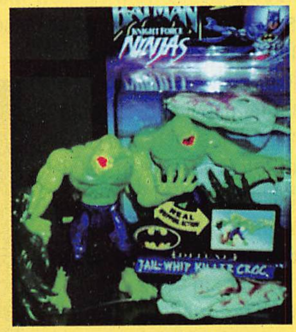
working on the prototypes—in fact, **riot** is the only place you'll even read about those.

It's no secret, however, that after Star Wars, Kenner's most successful action figure line is Batman. 1998 brings many more figures from the various Batman lines to light, including still more *Batman and Robin* movie





figures, with new assortments scheduled all the way through the summer and including Sky Assault Batman and Jet Pack Mr. Freeze. Look for these to be tough finds, as toy stores with lots of movie figures still on shelves order only a couple cases. Meanwhile, in the fan-favorite Animated assortment, look for The Creeper, Undercover Bruce Wayne, and Wild Card Joker out by late summer. Completely new to the Animated line, however, will be a 12" assortment, featuring Nightwing, Batman, and The Joker, as well as two new regular-sized playsets: Arkham Asylum, and Gotham City Bank. That's not all—there's still plenty of new figures due in the Legends of the Dark Knight assortment, including Clayface, Batgirl, and Lava Fury Batman. Finally in Batman, watch for the Night Force Ninja Assortment, which should be out any day and features a Killer Croc like none you can imagine.



Finally, two other lines from Kenner, both based on movies, one of them new and one from last year: *Small Soldiers* and *Jurassic Park*. *Small Soldiers* is a new feature film due this summer from Dreamworks, and featuring the same sort of CGI fans thrilled to in Toy Story a couple summers back. The previews **riot** saw look great, and the film seems perfect for transition to toy shelves as the main characters are, well, action figures. Literally. Look for heroes like Archer, Nick Nitro, and Chip Hazard, as well as enemies like Doctor Insaniac, and Freakenstein. There will also be a large assortment of vehicles and playsets. From the Jurassic Park line, there's a new assortment called Chaos Effect. What the Chaos Effect is, we're not certain. The dinos look as though they went crashing through a neon paint warehouse, which isn't bad really, but is a bit confusing. Was that scene left out of the movie? Whatever the case, the figures are sure to please kids and collectors as Kenner continues to get amazing licenses that ensure long life in the stores.



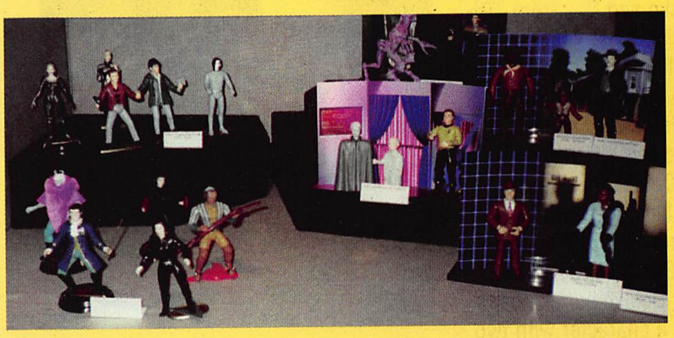






PLAYMATES

One company that's no stranger to having excellent licenses with long shelf life is Playmates. Their Star Trek license has resulted in hugely collectable toys over the past five years, and their plans for 1998 are



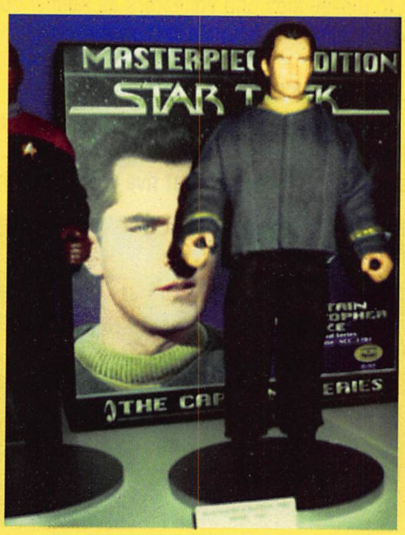
not surprisingly centered around this line. Their showroom, while smartly arranged and full of diverse rooms representing their entire line (including girls' toys) took extra pains when it came to the Trek license, with that room made out to look like a futuristic bar on one of the Federation's spaceships. As for what's new in '98? Collectors can watch for plenty of new basic figures, including Keiko O'Brien, Kang, Trelane, a new Kira, and Andorian Prisoner, all in the Spring. In the late summer, look for Kirk and Spock from the episode "City on the Edge of Forever," Seven of Nine, and the much-anticipated Borg Queen. Look for twin-pack assortments in the summer and fall as well, with Picard and Dixon Hill and Guinan packaged together, Kirk and Keeper, Scorpion



Alien and Harry Kim, as well as Data, Worf, and Alexander all in multi-packs. Some of the biggest news from the Star Trek line this year, though, is the new Transporter Series. Featuring regular-sized figures in a special transporter base that lights up and makes authentic sounds



from the series, these are sure to catch on with fans. Look for the bridge crews of both the classic series (May) and the Next Generation (November). But that's still not all. The 9" collector line has become perhaps the most popular of the Star Trek lines, and there's plenty to look for in '98. In May, watch for Sisko and Dax from "Trials and Tribulations," as well as the hotly expected Seven of Nine. In August, Bele, Garek, and the Talosian hit shelves, while in October, Edith Keeler, Trelane, and Kirk in Environmental Suit appear. And new to the 9" line, the Deluxe series, featuring a character with two different outfits they appeared in during the series. Look for Data as Sherlock Holmes and Locutus of Borg in May, then Kira from "Way of the Warrior" and Spock from *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* in November. And yes, the detailing on those costumes is fantastic. Playmates isn't totally Trek, though. Also coming from them in '98 are more Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, including Camo-Armor figures and





Turtleflage figures, which feature a totally unique action for a toy. When the figure's cloth bandanna is extended, it totally conceals them from view to blend into a background that comes packaged with the figure. And also from Playmates, to coincide with the new *Zorro* motion picture, yes, action figures. The assortments include a number of Zorro figures, Evil Ramon, Machete, and Lady Rawhide, who does not appear in the movie. Plus, Playmates has packaged a couple exclusive figures in their Horse and Rider assortments, with action mimicking those in the movie. Once again, the movie licenses seem to be what's hot in toy-land.

Mattel

No stranger to hot licenses, Mattel has a couple of their own this year. Of course finding them in the massive Mattel showroom was a bit of a task, but, as always, **riot** came though. First up is the new line of toys supporting Disney's upcoming animated film *A Bug's Life*, previews of which have already started showing throughout the country to much anticipation. The figures are beautifully done, with the usual care to detail exhibited by Mattel in its past action figure work for Disney. There are loads of playsets, figure packs, and special toys in store for collectors and kids. The highlight of the line is the deluxe Flik, a larger scale figure that comes to life with sound and motion reminiscent of the character in the film. It is a truly marvelous toy that's sure to fly off shelves.

Look for more cool Disney-related action figures from Mattel as well,



including pieces from the new *Merlin* animated feature, hitting theaters this summer. While most of these are geared towards a girls' market, many collectors will still enjoy the line due to its amazing detail and colorful variety. Plus there will be *new Toy Story* toys in 1998, to build the excitement for *Toy Story II*, still in the planning stages but scheduled to hit theaters in 1999. This year, look for cool variations including Space Claw Buzz, Space Sheriff Woody, and a new Racer Rex. Plus, just for the holidays, collectors can look for a Christmas Edition Buzz Lightyear, decked out in red and green chrome. With so many cool toys happening in 1998, the hardest decision collectors will have to make is which ones to open and play with!



riot

Virtual On 2 Not On For America

The arcade rumors are flying that *VO2* is not going to be released in the U.S. While there's no official word from Sega yet (a yea or nay, please...), don't hold your breath if you're looking for this hot title. Sales of the first *Virtual On* were very poor in the U.S. At least the Gameworks in Seattle will have it. How much is a flight to Seattle, anyone?

Katana Unsheathed

Yup, we're hearing that developers are putting the finishing touches on the first few games to be launched on Sega's new platform, the Katana. What games are we talking about? *Super GT*, *Virtua Fighter 3*, and *Sega Rally 2* will be part of the initial wave of Katana games, which will probably be available early '99.

Beyond that, we've heard that the Katana will make its Japanese debut November of this year and will launch with the three aforementioned games as well as some intial 3rd party games. *Street Fighter 3* and a new title from Konami are expected to be among the first, with persistent rumblings that *Lunar 3* will be there to welcome the console into Japan (better book a flight now).

As for Katana's debut, May 23 will be the first public showing of Warp's *D2* title. Originally slated for M2, then Saturn, speculation rests firmly on thet fact that it will be a Katana game. However, the game will not be announced as a Katana game at that showing and there wil be no visible hardware at the showing.

E3 is looking good for a Katana debut, but don't expect video walls or a public showing of the unit. Sega plans to show the unit behind closed doors to press and buyers only. We'll be there with cameras blazing!

As for other titles in development, look for a clutch of titles from Visual Concepts in the sports and action title departments as well as a number of PC titles (including *Unreal*) to be among the initial releases.

N64 DD = Delayed Doom?

In an announcement which shocked nobody, Nintendo announced that the 64DD, the readable/writeable optical peripheral for the N64, has been delayed again. Game developers are already wary of developing software for the DD since nobody knows how well it will do. With unsure software support coming out for the peripheral, there's speculation that the idea might be canned entirely.

In other DD news, there's been talk of a game to be released in Japan which, when you go to your nearest supermarket, you'll be able to buy an update to your game (new items/equipment), assuming you have the 64DD. Whether this idea of literally shopping for the latest game will fly or not... we'll have to see.

The already shaky Japanese intro (which was to take place this June) has cast a lot of doubt as to whether the machine will ever see the light of day in the US, regardless of whether it makes it out in Japan.

Lastly, there's talk of a *DragonsQuest* game being developed for DD. We'll let you know more as we hear it.

Move Over *Trinity*... Hello *Quake 3*!

This was the rally cry as *Quake 2* disappeared off of store shelves last Christmas (it was a tough fight with *Deer Hunter*—some really 'boredom tolerable' people out there). Maybe it's because of id's success with their sequel to *Quake* that they're speeding up development on *Quake 3*. In fact, it's now set to come out before *Trinity*, id's other new game in development. So all you fraggin' fools enjoying *Quake 2*... you have something to look forward to.

Grandia Coming to the U.S.!!!

Did I mention it's for the PlayStation? At this point, companies are bidding on the rights for the *PS* version of ECM's "Oh my God!" RPG of the century for the Saturn. Just one of the companies in the running is Acclaim (there are others, which we'll let you speculate on), who have also acquired the rights to do a *South Park* game. Kick ass!

Activision Tempers *Tenchu*

Activision has acquired the rights to bring *Tenchu*, the stealthy ninja game, to the States. But instead of just bringing it over as is, there's talk of them cleaning up problems in the game such as slowdown, camera angles, AI, and polygon glitching. A better translation than the Japanese version? Well worth the wait if it materializes. Look for it by Christmas.

Crystal Up for Bid?

Rumors are circulating that Crystal Dynamics, developers of the cover story, *Legacy of Kain: Soul Reaver*, is going to be bought out. Companies expressing interest include Midway, Activision, and GT Interactive.

Lights, camera, Interplay?!

Yep, that's right, Interplay has started an in-house (so to speak) film division to take some of their hottest game properties and make them into full-blown feature films. The initial wave includes *Descent* and *Fallout* and one other yet to be determined.

While we're all for movies based on games, they haven't exactly been the biggest movies going (MK2, anyone?). Here's to praying that Interplay gets it right—I don't think I can bear another *Street Fighter*...

N64 Release Roller Coaster

First *Banjo and Kazooie* was scheduled for a July US debut. Then Nintendo moved it up to June 15. Then they moved it to June 27, where we presume it will stay (cross your fingers). The wild ride for *Banjo* isn't the only one for N64 games in development, here's an updated list of Nintendo's titles leading up to the all-important quarter 4:

Banjo and Kazooie	June 27
F-Zero X	August
Zelda: TOOT	November
Bomberman Hero	December

These are Nintendo's own titles, but that doesn't mean that something else couldn't slip in there at some point.

A Little Light Shed on Project X

Word is that Matsushita is one of the initial backers of this fledgling technology designed by a number of former Atari employees (including the gent behind the Jaguar hardware). Where this places what's left of the M2 hardware they spent $100 million on is anybody's guess.

Above and beyond that, there are approximately 50 developers on board for development, including Europe's Climax (not to be confused with the Climax of *Landstalker*, *Dark Savior*, and *Felony 11-79* fame).

A number of Sony employees have jumped ship for VM Labs (the company behind the hardware design) and show that if you're willing to leave the paradise that is Sony right now, this thing must be at least pretty kicking.

Expect more info come E3.

Wild 9 on *Running Wild*

Apparently Shiny's "should have been released long ago" *Wild 9* is going through yet another revamping with Dave Perry personally on board to help salvage the sinking project.

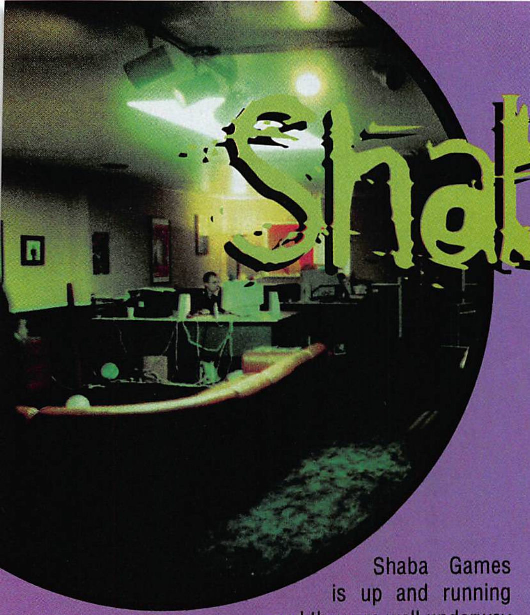
Seems the game that was once to give *Mario 64* a run for it's money may be on its last legs—c'mon Shiny, you can do it!

Heart of Darkness Comes Out of the Dark

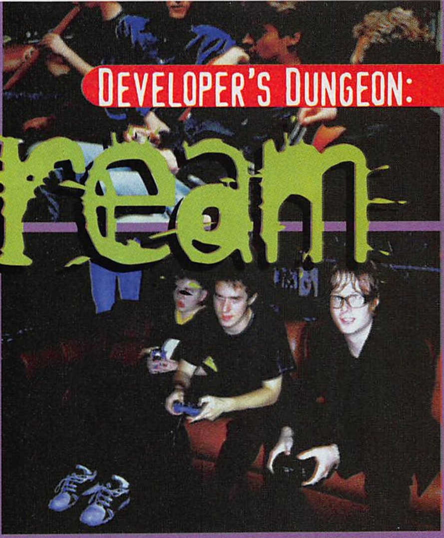
Now here's a gaming soap opera if there ever ws one: Oringally slated to come out over 3 yrs. ago, *Heart of Darkness* is still coming. After Virgin bailng on it after spiraling development costs, and Sega even kicking in for the game's initial debut on the Saturn, the game is still coming.

Currently it's slated for late this year on both the PlayStation and PC. We have some newer shots of the game now that it's running in 24-bit color, take a gander at these and expect more info come E3 (where have I heard that before?).





Shaba's Dream











Shaba Games is up and running and they are well underway with their first super secret title and the Video Cowboy was the first one to set on their trail.

The eight founders of Shaba Games were an integral part of the team that made *Pandemonium* and *Pandemonium 2* for Crystal Dynamics before they parted ways. The games had sales in excess of one million units worldwide. These eight left Crystal Dynamics on very good terms but creating Shaba was an opportunity that none of them wanted to pass up.

"Shaba is the Japanese word used in old Japanese gangster movies," explained Kurt Reiner a programmer on the team. "Imagine a powerful old gangster who has been sitting in jail for 30 years. Everyday, he sits and looks out his cell window at freedom. Day after day he does this. When he's finally released, he steps outside the jail, surrounded by his henchmen, breathes in the fresh air, hears a babbling brook, and sees a falcon soaring above. He'd reach inside his coat pocket, pull out a cigarette, light it up and whisper 'Shaba.'"

After working together for over two years, the group agreed that the key to their success has been team unity. They are hoping they can continue this with Shaba.

Team Shaba has developed a creative system that empowers the individual. Creative control is decentralized, blending the roles of design, art and programming, permitting each member of the team to realize his or her own dreams. But even with this decentralization, a strong team concept is sustained by a mutual respect for one another. Each member feels the responsibility to create a game that represents the best of their combined effort. Creative freedom will give Shaba's games a unique flair that will set them apart from the rest. Shaba is, for its members, a dream come true.

Scott Werner and Laura Grieve are the artists for the company. Scott was a contract artist when he joined the crew at Crystal to work on Pandemonium. Laura's first job was a three-year stint at Psygnosis where she worked on various titles including track designs for WipeOut. She left Scotland to come to Crystal, where she worked on *Gex*, *Pandemonium* and *Pandemonium 2*.

Zak Krefting, Chris Scholz, Reuben Simonson, and Tom Teuscher are the designers for Shaba. Steven Timson, Kurt Reiner and Rick D'Aloisio are handling the programming duties for the group. Jeanne and Garret Scholz are the management team for Shaba.

Their first title is going to be something like a racing, fighting, character-building, character-driven type of game. Right now the group is hard at work redefining the design of their first title, *Slipgroove*, as well as working with several potential publishers.

Their offices have two parts, one entitled heaven, where the artists sit, with cloud patterns on the walls and a very, very relaxing color scheme. On the other side of the room there lies the programmers' domain that they refer to as Hell. The color scheme there is, as you might have guessed, full of flames.

The Shaba philosophy is quite simple. Make games and have fun doing so. The group is more like a large family than a business, but Chris Scholz knows that it is still an entity, which, in order to succeed, will need a little luck as well as plenty of dedication and hard work.

"I think the smaller developer is the wave of the future. Smaller developers have a lot of passion for what they are doing," Scholz said. "I think this is a trend that will continue to grow within our industry where you will have bigger publishers farming out games to smaller developers."

"Probably the biggest difference between Shaba and other studios is that at Shaba, there is no hierarchy. All of the members have an equal share in the company and equal say as to what we make. While this does add a pint of chaos to our meetings, it makes everybody take that much more responsibility for all of the aspects of making our game," Scholz said.

"I've talked to other people in the industry who are beyond jaded. They go to work and do what they're told and that's it. They don't invest anything of themselves in their jobs. It sounds corny, or maybe even depressing, but we view work as being our life, not just our job. It's not a job, it's an adventure."

Slipgroove, Shaba's First Title

You drop in on a 200-foot meta-scraper and make a compact dash for the exit. Your victim lies in front of you. Hurling out your Gravline, you snag him by the tail and start reeling him in like an airborne Marlin. He lays his slab down on edge, hops a rail, and does a 180 in a futile attempt to escape.

You give a final pull, and jump up into a spinning guillotine. Your edge catches him in the cranium and he emits a wet gurgling sound. He crumples and does a rag doll along the pavement. With a parting ollie to his head, you kick in your mags, carve some laid back slashes, and race by.

Now you're in the Groove.

Slipgroove is a 1-2 player futuristic gladiatorial death race, with multiple characters riding armed hoverboards, earning points for speed, performing tricks, and dismembering your opponents. *Slipgroove* incorporates the best elements of the racing and fighting genres, giving the players the hypnotic high-speed thrills of a racer coupled with the gratification of beating your opponent to a pulp.

Slipgroove is going to push the PlayStation to its limits. It features fluid, full 3d movement running at a minimum of 30 fps. The graphics are displayed in high resolution, and by incorporating kinematic bone structures on single-skinned models, the characters have realistic motion. The engine also features animated vertex coloring, animating transparencies and material parameters, multiple levels of transparency within a single texture, precalculated and real-time lighting, and screen filters to differentiate character viewing capabilities.

10 reasons why Shaba is the greatest development house in the Lower 48.

10. Pact with devil.
9. Daily Jerry Springer.
8. <Censored>
7. Techno at 3:00 A.M.
6. Our very own wet Bar.
5. The roaches.
4. Endless creative putdowns.
3. The ONLY "Ma & Pa" development house left in America.
2. Magic Mormon Underwear.
1. Humonculoids!!



In a bit of skullduggery, I intercepted a piece of mail, to our sister publication, MegaFan. *In the envelope, I discovered a letter and these two pictures. I felt that this young stallion deserved some recognition. At the same time, I had a great idea that I thought I'd run by you folks. Send in pictures of yourself! Every month I'll print the photo of the most hard-core* GameFan *reader, dedicating that issue's*





Postmeister to the lucky someone.

So, without further ado, I dedicate this Posty to Nikolai, the boy with the spiffy FFVII *jacket.*

WAR GOD WORSHIP

Dear Posty,

I love your magazine! It's by far better than [censored], but a lot of things are. I read Volume 6, Issue 2 and was a bit insulted when I read what ECM had to write about *War Gods*. He said that *Fighter's Destiny* was better than *War Gods*. What kind of sick people are working over there? I've played both games and *Fighter's Destiny* was crap, and to even compare it to *War Gods* is ignorant. 3-D gore I'll take any day over a crappy game like *Fighter's Destiny*. *War Gods* has realistic 3-D characters; *Fighter's Destiny* looks like it was built from building blocks.

Thanks,
James Glass
Georgetown, SC

Dear James,

I thought it'd be best if I let ECM respond to your letter. Also, to show you that we are open to many opinions, I am allowing Dangohead to also respond to your letter, so you won't have to hear just what ECM says. Before I turn it over to them, though, a word of advice: Never expose your poor taste to people who don't know you; it makes it so much harder for them to formulate a fair opinion of you, that way.

ECM replies: "Sick people?! You openly admit that you like War Gods *better than any game and I'm sick?! Now I think I'm going to be ill... please excuse me while I empty the contents of my stomach in the general direction of South Carolina... <blech>... that's better. Anyhow, it's because of people like you that we get games as poor as* War Gods. *I bet you think* Cruisin' USA *is better than* Top Gear Rally, *too. I'm gonna turn this over to Dangohead before I get the urge to get in my car and drive to SC for some 're-education', ECM-style... (involves a baseball bat, a monkey and a copy of* Rise of the Robots *for GameBoy)."*

DANGOHEAD replies: Okay... I'll be a tad gentler than ECM. War Gods *bites the big one in my book of fighting games, but hey, different strokes for different folks, right? I mean, if you really like pixellated characters that move with the fluidity of stone statues, slow to medium-slow fighting speed... oh, and let's not forget that gore. That always feeds the frenzied fighting fanatics of flesh and blood dismemberment. Sure, everybody likes all these things in a fighting game, so screw solid gameplay, replayability, and cool character design (the bile still remains in my mouth after seeing that Kabuki fighter for the first time). While* Fighter's Destiny *may be far from the best fighting games of all time,* War Gods *has but one place in life... (here Fido...fetch!). And realistic 3-D characters!?!? Now, I'm thinking about buying ECM a flight to SC (I'd rather not join him... he gets pretty ugly with those monkeys of his).*

DESPERATELY SEEKING SAILOR

Dear Postmeister,

Hello! I am really thrilled to get your attention in a way that I can't explain. My name is Julie Ann Lee, 12 soon to be 13. Anyways, I really like your letter section—it's really cool. I want to write to all of the people who really love (and I mean *really* love) *Sailor Moon*. I don't give a damn if they are 28 or 46 or a boy, or a girl; it doesn't really matter, to me. I mean, different people are so cool and creative and I like different people.

Back to my point: I like Sailor Moon and she rocks! I've seen the Sailor Stars and Neherenia in action and it's so great. A boring start but in the middle to the end, it kills you. And you want to see more episodes, but sorry, it doesn't work that way. I wish it did. Postmeister, can you do me a favor? Please contact or do *anything* to get *Sailor Moon* fans' attention, to write to me. I swear I will write back and send a picture of my favorite *Sailor Moon* scout, Neptune; she's awesome and beautiful!

Postmeister, please expose my address to the whole wide world so I can get wonderful letters! And I want to become one of your famous letter-writing people because I want to be popular, in your section.

Love,
Julie Ann Lee
N.Y., NY

Dear Julie Ann,

Consider yourself famous. I really think you and Shidoshi should get together. Unfortunately, I wished him away into a cornfield, so it may be tough to get ahold of him (do they have phones in Nebraska?). He is a huge Sailor Moon *fan and even has a collection of* Sailor Moon *beanie babies- including the special edition Sequin Sailor Moon. You can e-mail him at shidoshi@gamefan.com.*

I must apologize, though, because I cannot print your address. Because of the twisted world we live in, it wouldn't be prudent for me to allow any crazy, reading this mag, to know where you live. Again, Shidoshi might try and contact you (do they have cars in Nebraska?).

Thanks for writing. I look forward to hearing from you, again. By chance would you be interested in a date with Nikolai? He is, after all, the bloke whom this Posty is dedicated to...

QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Dear Postmeister,

I have a few questions about Nintendo:

1: Will Nintendo be getting any shooters for its light gun, like *Virtual Cop*, *House Of the Dead*, *Time Crisis*; those kind of games?
2: Will Nintendo be getting any space shooters like *Einhander*, *Darius Gaiden*, or *Thunder Force V*?
3: Will Nintendo be getting any robot sims besides *Last Legion*, like *Mech Warrior 2*, *Front Mission Alternative*, or *Armored Core*?
4: Along with EA's magnificent line-up for Nintendo, will they be making a *WarCraft* game for the N64?
5: In your November issue you said there were going to be six sequels to *Shadows of the Empire*, 3 of them SNES and the other 3 unknown. So where are they?
6: In the March issue you had an [interview] with Lobotomy and Core. In the [interview] with Lobotomy, they said they had several concepts for the N64. Could *Powerslave 64* and *Aquaria* be two of them? In the [interview] with Core, they said that *Tomb Raider* running on 3D/FX would look great—so why won't they make it along with *Fighting Force*?
7: In your September issue you said that *Mario Kart* will be getting a sequel, and

that *Earthbound* will be getting several things. I haven't heard about them in Nintendo Power, so where are they?
8: Also in September, in the Europe Report section, you said *Croc* and *Rascal* were being developed r the N64. Is this true?

Yours truly,
Isaiah Francis
Lakeland, FLA

Dear Isaiah,
Is anyone else out there reminded of that little chatterbox mouse in the old Warner Bros. cartoons? Slow down, Isaiah; take a breath. Now, let me respond to your flurry of questions:
1. Seeing as how the N64 lacks a light gun, the chance of seeing any of those games is about the same as Eggo admitting that WarCraft *requires no skill to play.*
2. I'll let ECM handle this one: "Shooters?! Yeah, right. Like Nintendo would ever tolerate the king of all genres on their '64-bit' system—why I oughta..." Translation: There is nothing in the pipeline at the moment, but we'll keep you updated.
3. See answer #2.
4. No WarCraft *that we're aware of, but Blizzard's other big game,* Diablo, *is coming to the N64 this year.*
5. They would fit squarely into the area of pre-production.
6. Alas, Lobotomy currently has NO plans for N64 development and even Aquaria *has slipped from the face of the earth.* Fighting Force, *however, will be seeing the light of day elsewhere...*
7. Seeing as how Nintendo Power is published by Nintendo themselves, and they'd still like to sell some more Mario Kart 64 *games, they're not going to talk about a sequel. It's coming, it's just a ways off. As for* Earthbound, *it's still scheduled for the delayed-once-again 64DD.*
8. As for Croc *and* Rascal *on the N64, well, we haven't heard anything new on those, and be happy that* Rascal *has been sent to bed without dinner... and received a very nasty spanking, as well.*

BRUCE CAMPBELL DISILLUSIONMENT

Dear Postmeister,
I have to give Square and Sony much credit for releasing one of the greatest gaming experiences ever: *Final Fantasy VII*. Also, for creating a game with an African American as one of the leads. There have been others in countless fighting games (*VS. 2*, anyone), but Barret has character unsurpassed by any of them. His presence and importance in the story meant a lot to me and I'm sure it did to many of your other readers. Finally... representation!!!
In volume 5 issue 12 you featured an interview with Bruce Campbell. Now I love *Evil Dead 1* & *2* (not *3*) just as much as the next guy but I don't understand Mr. Campbell's ego or comments.
1. He does voice-overs for games but isn't an avid gameplayer
2. He "never" watches horror movies and thinks "most of them are pretty stupid." Let's not forget, without the genre, he'd be nothing.
3. He likes to watch other actors' mistakes (?!). Bruce is good for camp but his skills aren't up to par, so I've lost respect.

Jason R. Clark
Waterbury, CT

Dear Jason,
It is nice to see minorities finally getting their due in video games. They're still lagging behind even Hollywood, though, and that ain't too good. You've gotta start somewhere, though...
I wasn't there for the article, so I too read what Bruce had to say when the mag came out. Like you, I love Campbell. From Evil Dead *to* Brisco County Jr., *he consistently makes me laugh. Sub-par skills, though? He's a much better actor than you think. I also think you're a little hard on him. I challenge anyone (and I mean anyone) to one-up me in the horror movie department. You won't find a bigger fan of the genre than I, but I agree with Bruce: most horror movies suck. The fact that films like* Leprechaun, Halloween 6 *and* Wishmaster *were ever allowed to hit the silver screen is shameful. To make a truly great horror film takes much more skill and care than most genres, and few are willing to make the effort. You should take what he said to heart; fans of the genre have been settling for second-rate product for decades (have you seen the garbage that Fangoria covers nowadays?).*
Why should he have to be an avid gamer? Showbiz is a flighty profession, and a man's gotta earn a paycheck. I highly doubt Bob Seger is a big Michelob Light fan...
Finally, how on earth can you say you didn't like Army Of Darkness*? That movie was a great spoof. With the exception of the scene with all of the little Ashes running around, that flick rocked. It is the proverbial icing on the cake.*
Jason, don't be so hard on Bruce—he was just being candid. If his comments dispelled some image you had of him, at least he was still cool enough to sit down and rap with a couple of guys from a video games magazine; do you think Arnold would do that?

MISSION: IMPROBABLE?

Dear Postmeister,
Wuz been happening? I pray that you print this letter, but until then I have some questions:
1. What happened to *Mission: Impossible* for the N64?
2. How do you think *Dragon Ball Z Legends* is and are there any more *DBZ* games coming to the US?

Sincerely,
Herman Sutton

Dear Herman,
It seems that your prayers have been answered, my son. Now on to your questions:
1. Mission: Impossible *for the N64 ran into a few roadblocks during its development that forced it into limbo for a couple of years. Rest assured, it's still coming and should be on shelves come June.*
2. Legends *is a great game. Hyper-kinetic* DBZ *madness, and it's probably the best* Dragon Ball *game out there—much better than those other so-called fighting games. The only* DBZ *game out in the US is* Dragon Ball Final Bout, *and that's something you don't want to touch with a ten-foot pole, or even a 5-foot pole for that matter. Beyond that, there are no other* DBZ *games slated for a stateside release.*

FROM THE ASHES?

Postmeister,
I was one of the original fans of *GameFan* way back in the day. Back when *GF* was new and you guys were kicking everybody's butt.
Then something happened: You got really, really lame. I should have known something bad was coming when *Battle Monsters* got six pages way back and Nick Rox started getting into his "totally fruity" state of mind.
Don't get me wrong, guys like Takuhi and Knightmare were good writers, but for the most part, whenever I actually picked up an issue in the last few years it's been pretty bleak.
However, I just recently borrowed a friend's copy of the *Burning Rangers* issue (after a bit of a delay) and was most surprised to see an almost totally new staff. At first I was expecting more of the usual less-than-stellar writing. Imagine my surprise when it was quite good. Not great, by any stretch, but it's certainly better than it's been in quite a while. Hopefully those new guys can help *GF* reclaim some of its past glory... I hope.
Thanks for reading and try to keep up the good work (hope the next issue isn't so delayed) and good luck in the future.

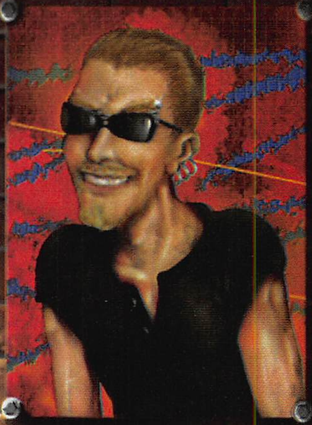
John Mullet
Denver, CO

Thanks John, we aim to please!

Write to me or I'll run for President!

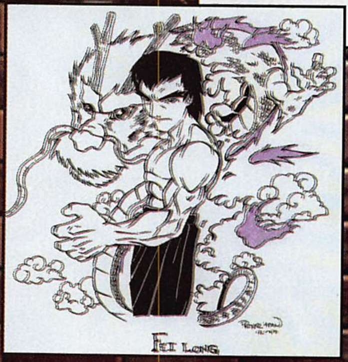
The Postmeister
5137 Clareton Dr. Suite 210
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

WOLFINGER'S WALL



IT'S TIME ONCE AGAIN TO CHECK OUT SOME MORE KICKIN' FAN ART. ENJOY.





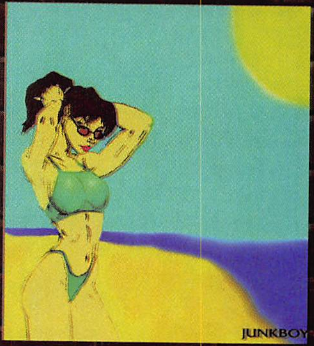








THE ART SHOWN HERE COMES TO US FROM PETER HAN, OF PORTLAND, OR. THIS FINE ASSORTMENT OF MOSTLY FIGHTING GAME CHARACTERS IS BEAUTIFULLY RENDERED IN PEN AND INK, AND YOUR COLORED RIKUO IS QUITE NICE, TOO. TAKE A BOW, PETER, THE SPOTLIGHT'S ON YOU. YOU'VE GOT A NICE STYLE GOING. KEEP IT UP.

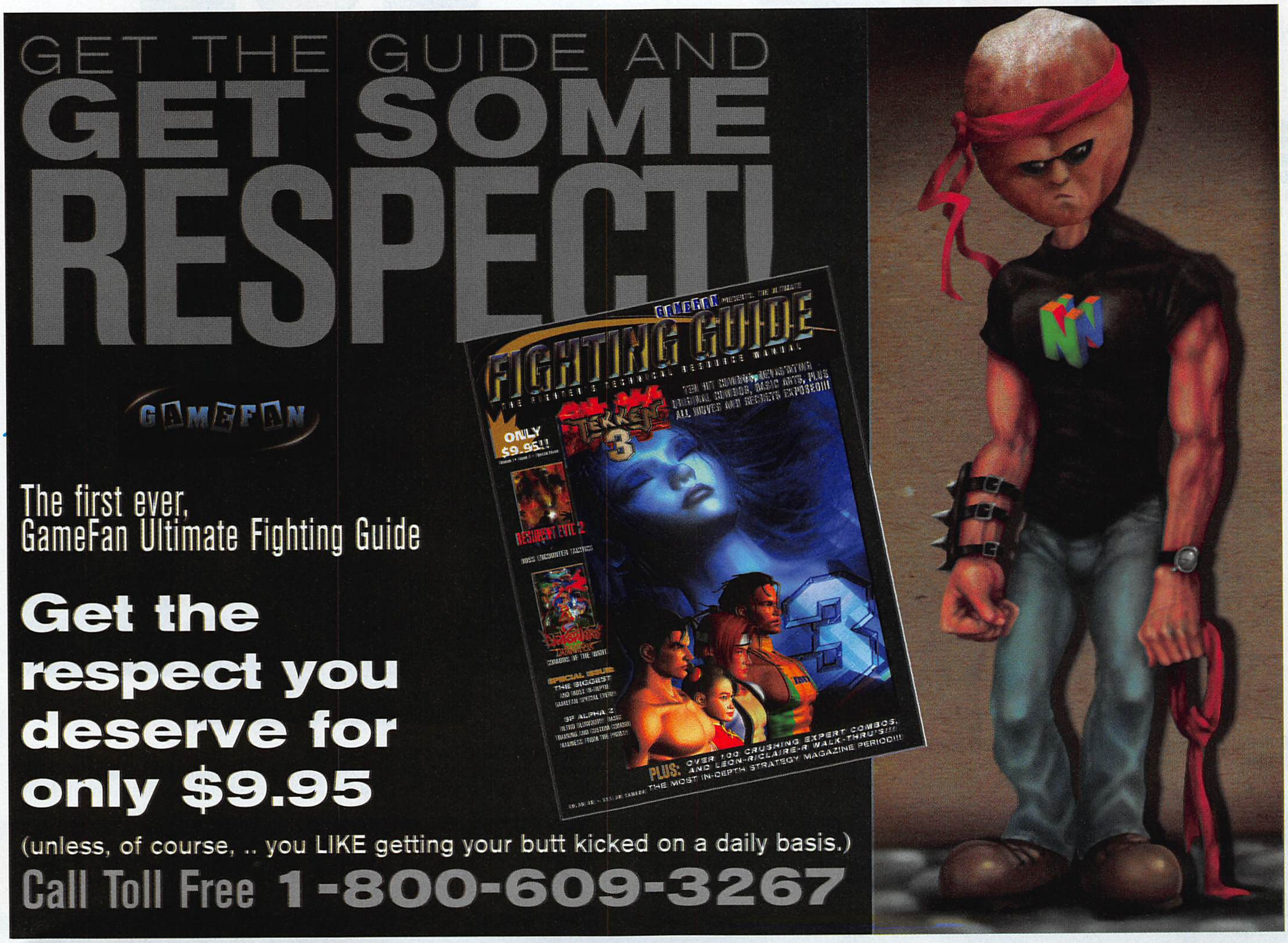


"I WISH THEY ALL COULD BE CALIFORNIA GIRLS..". THIS SEXY SUMMER SCENE WAS SENT BY TUFFY "JUNKBOY" WILLIAMS OF LEE'S SUMMIT, MO. NOW WE KNOW HOW LARA SPENDS HER DAYS OFF. HEY, TOMBS CAN GET STUFFY! SO... DID YOUR PARENTS REALLY NAME YOU "TUFFY"?



CARSTEN BRADLEY OF STOCKBRIDGE, GA SHOWS US HIS VERSION OF THAT WHACKY METROID CHICK. VERY NICE AND GOOD USE OF THE DIGITAL MEDIUM.

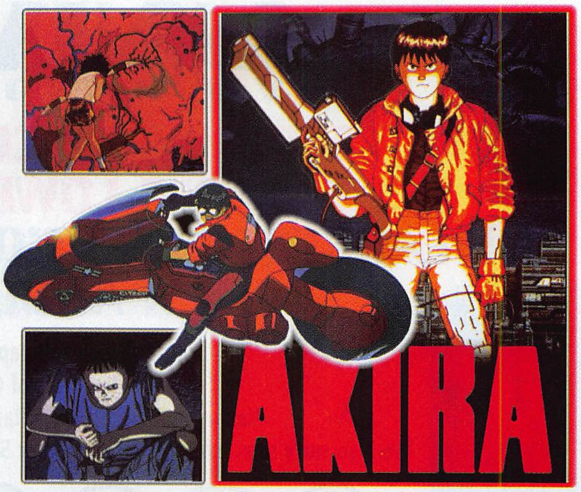

UNIVERSE®
V★I★D★E★O ★ G★A★M★E★S
DESTROYS THE COMPETITION WITH OUR UNBEATABLE LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEE !!
THE LARGEST SELECTION OF IMPORT VIDEO GAMES FROM AROUND THE WORLD !
Wholesale Japanese Video Game Outlet
Largest Importer of Games, Systems and Accessories
We Supply Distributors Retailers and Offer Direct Sales to The Public
We also carry rare, hard to find games for Super Farmicon, Mega Drive, Duo, 3DO, Jaguar and more
Saturn:
Pocket Fighter
Dracula X
Deep Fear
Sol Divide
Radiant Silvergun
Langrisser 5
Macross
Dragon Ball
PlayStation:
King Of Fighters 97
Real Bout Fatal Fury
Soukagi
Evangelion
Parasite Eve
Destrega
JGT Racing
Nintendo 64:
F-Zero
Star Soldier
Bomberman Hero
Banjo Kazooie
Zelda
Dezaemon 3D
Quest 64
Mission Impossible
Import Export
Games $14.99 and up
PC CD
Neo-Geo
Game Music
Wall Scrolls
Toy and Anime Products
Action Figures
FREE converter with purchase of selected titles
Wholesale Dealers and Mail Order Customers Welcome
919-872-2440
24-hour video game order info hotline
MasterCard
AMERICAN EXPRESS
VISA
PRE-PAY
TRADE-IN
COD
BUY DIRECT AND SAVE!!
919-872-6701 fax
Call today, play tomorrow
Seven days a week
9:00–7:00 EST
Universe Video Games
3132 Calvary Drive
Suite 107
Raleigh, NC 27604
All rights reserved for all parties mentioned. We reserve the right to refuse any sale, trade or purchase. Games are subject to availability.


GET THE GUIDE AND
GET SOME RESPECT!
GAMEFAN
FIGHTING GUIDE
TEKKEN 3
ONLY $9.95!!
RESIDENT EVIL 2
The first ever, GameFan Ultimate Fighting Guide
Get the respect you deserve for only $9.95
(unless, of course, .. you LIKE getting your butt kicked on a daily basis.)
Call Toll Free 1-800-609-3267



DRACULA X ANOUTHER SYMPHONY IMPORT SATURN

The best 2D action game next to Super Metroid finally comes to the Best 2D machine on the market. Dracula X on the Saturn allows you to actually play as Maria right from the get go. Plus all new spells, all new moves and new unearthly stages to explore. Get the game and the original soundtrack **$81.95.** Game only **$62.95** Music only **$29.95**



AKIRA WALLSCROLL GAME CAVE EXCLUSIVE

The most world renown anime finally gets a scroll. We just had to do it! I just could not stand not paying patronage to such a wonderful animated film. Cover your walls in Akira glory. Exclusively at Game Cave for 6 month's. Normal price $19.95. Mention this Ad and get the scroll for **$16.95.**



VAMPIRE SAVIOR IMPORT SATURN GAME AND MOVE GUIDE SPECIAL

"Enter the Lore of the Vampire", just know what your doing when you get there ! Get the "I am cool because I own this game" game and official strategy guide right now for one incongruous price **$64.95** Game only **$58.95**



SAKURA WARS 2 IMPORT SATURN AND ACTION FIGURE SPECIAL

The fact that you will NEVER see this game in the states is purely criminal ! The first one was "THE BEST". SW2, I wont try to "wow" you with the details, you must see this for yourself. **$69.95.** Get $4 off any Sakura Wars action figure when you purchase the game with the figure.



DRAGON BALL Z ILLUSTRATION BOOK, SCROLL AND MUSIC SPECIAL

"Audi audi audi ahhhhhhhhhhhhhh !!! " Ok, let's get serious. DBZ world illustrations book with any DBZ single disc music CD **$32.95** DBZ super saiyan wallscroll with any DBZ single disc music CD **$31.95**



SOKAIGI IMPORT PLAYSTATION SQUARE DISCOUNT

This game is like a combination of Tenchu, Xenogears, and the Bushido Blade series. You didn't just ask me if it was awesome did you ? **$68.95** ($5 OFF with other Square merchandise) ENJOY!

GF0016

Open Monday thru Friday 8am-7pm, Saturday and Sunday 8am-5pm PST

Your C.O.D. Welcome

Game Cave Welcomes All Dealer & Wholesale Accounts!

Info Line: 1-626/930-1300

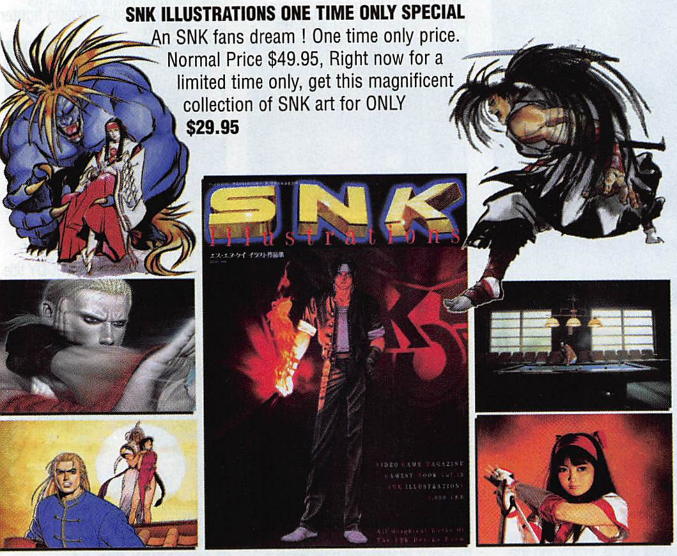
Visit Our Web Site: http:/www.gamecave.com Call Toll Free, For Orders only: 1-888/GameCave



XMEN VS STREETFIGHTER GAME AND ACTION FIGURE SPECIAL
The best thing since sliced bread. Just like a door needs a knob, a Saturn needs the "BIG X". Just in case you are sitting at home with your Saturn wondering just what your going to do, your answer is here ! The best ever, all packed up with the official Xmen VS Streetfighter action figures. Choose from any set of the figures. Game only = **$74.95** Game and Action figures = **$81.95** (How can you beat that!)



POCKET FIGHTER IMPORT SATURN CAPCOM SPECIAL
Just think, Chun Li, Sakura, and Hsien-Ko in your pocket guys, and for the girls, Ken, Ryu and Dan in your purse. Pocket fighter is here, the rockin little Capcom title that will blow both your socks and pockets off. Meisa~Meisa . . . **Receive $5 OFF** your order when you purchase any Capcom products with your purchase of Pocket Fighter. Pocket Fighter game only **$62.95**



SNK ILLUSTRATIONS ONE TIME ONLY SPECIAL
An SNK fans dream ! One time only price. Normal Price $49.95, Right now for a limited time only, get this magnificent collection of SNK art for ONLY **$29.95**



ZELDA 64 IMPORT NINTENDO 64
"Finally" Sorry I took soooo long, but hey games like me are worth the wait. **$68.95**



ARASITE EVE ORIGINAL MUSIC CD LISS SPECIAL
ere is a list of my fav's.
- Landstalker (Genesis)
- Panzer Dragoon Azel RPG (Import Saturn)
- Biohazard 2 (Import Playstation)

Vhy am I telling you this ? Simple, I could throw every game I have ever layed in the trash, just to play Parasite Eve. The end all title is the perect way to describe this master work, the soundtrack ? Heaven, I'm in leaven. **$6 OFF** your order when you buy any other Square music. Call or price for Parasite Eve orig.



EVANGELION MUSIC AND SCROLL SPECIAL "Fly Rei to the moon"
See page 4 for music CD description. Get the EVA philharmonic (2D SET) and our most recent Rei scroll together for one unbeatable price. **($46.95)** EVA P music CD = **$42.95** Rei scroll = **$18.95** sold separately.

GAME CAVE
Everything for the gaming enthusiast!

New Prices! PlayStation Software



ENIGMA IMPORT PLAYSTATION $72.95 Look at this screen shot, could this be real ? What is gaming coming to ? Koei's Enigma plays similar to the insatiable Tenchu. Truly amazing !



KING OF THE FIGHTERS 97 IMPORT PLAYSTATION SNK, continues to produce wondrous 2D fighters with those distinguished personalities that we have all grown to love. Blazing team battles, customizing chaos ~ all your favorite teams, all your favorite pounding ! You get the point. **$72.95**



SILOUHETTE MIRAGE IMPORT PLAYSTATION Your imagination has traveled to new environments, new formats, new consoles. Treasure's juicy little treasure has brought the 21st century to your playstation. All the wackiness, surreal comedic pleasure, and finger busting fun of the original version. **$68.95**



PARASITE EVE IMPORT PLAYSTATION $69.95 Imagine a game with endless enemy potential. Once the paraplismic slime enters the cell of anything, plant, animal, human, its all over . . . . carnage, carnage, carnage.



XENOGEARS IMPORT PLAYSTATION $72.95 Chrono Trigger and Fighting fans your game is here. With a battle engine that combines Chrono style with various fighting elements, this title is sure to please.



GUNDAM BATTLE MASTERS 2 IMPORT PLAYSTATION $69.95 The game with the BIGGEST on screen characters ever, gets a sequel, any improvements ? Prepare for the best.



SOKAIGI IMPORT PLAYSTATION $Call for price. Have you ever wanted to jump from roof top to roof top skillfully cutting down your enemies with an ancient samurai sword? Now you can do just that without serving time. Sokaigi . . . 3 CD's of sword hacking madness.



BUSHIDO BLADE 2 IMPORT PLAYSTATION Square must have 100,000 programmers working 24-7 to produce games like this ! With the new "IMPROVED" fighting engine, BB 2 slaughters !!! **$72.95**



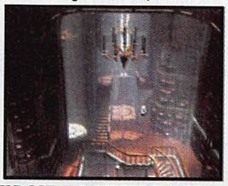
POCKET FIGHTER IMP. PSX Little bit of Street Fighter, little bit of Darkstalkers, all in little bits. The first SD fighter comes home. I know what your thinking, too cute for me. Think again, this may be the most addicting fighter ever. **$69.95**



CYBERBOTS IMPORT PLAYSTATION $67.95 Cyberbots comes to PS. Thanks Capcom for not leaving out the astronomical amount of PS players, GOOD JOB !



Z-GUNDAM IMPORT PLAYSTATION $79.95 In the past all the Gundam's in the "Z" series were semi - poor rendered side scroll action shooters. A change has taken place, when you witness this 3D action Gundam shooter, realizations will rise.



STAR OCEAN 2 IMPORT PLAYSTATION $72.95 Any of you remember Star Ocean for SFAM ? Now that Enix has signed on with the Playstation relive the days of old in 16 millions colors, CD quality sound and an all new adventure !!!



TENCHU IMPORT PLAYSTATION $68.95 Motion captured by world famous marital arts master Sho Kosugi. This immensely BLOODY title is sooo much more insane than you could even imagine. Sony Computer and Music Enter. seem to ONLY produce the winners these days !



CHOCOBOS AMAZING DUNGEON IMPORT PLAYSTATION $73.95 Chocobo, Chocobo were ought thou Chocobo !



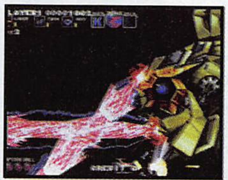
R-TYPE DELTA IMPORT PLAYSTATION $68.95 What do you think of when you hear the name Mario ? (ACTION) Phantasy Star (RPG) Track and Field (SPORTS) R-type (SHOOTER !!!!) The household shooter of all time goes ballistic. The 10th generation R-type has arrived.



TAIL CONCERTO IMPORT PLAYSTATION $68.95 Ponder if you will for a moment a Klonoa style game with very inventive RPG elements. Throw in some Klonoa - Rockman Dashesque style graphic flair, and you have T. Concerto. I cant wait for this baby!



FINAL FANTASY 5 REPRISE IMPORT PLAYSTATION $Call for the lowest price. Following the same formatting as FF 4 Reprise, same game, same music, but all new trade mark Square CG's. One difference, this game will never ever see a U.S. release!!!!



G-DARIUS IMPORT PLAYSTATION $72.95 I have never really thought that there has been a true pure coin-op power shooter ever released on a home console before. Einhander was the closest, G-Darius may just make the mark.



SAMURAI SHOWDOWN 1-2 FENCING PACK IMPORT PLAYSTATION $62.95 Where is the Saturn version ? ? ? What happened ? ? ? Oh well, here is the PS version, slice away those bloody bones ! * ! * ! * !

New Prices! Saturn Software



ALL JAPAN PRO WRESTLING F-VIRTUA FIGHTERS IMPORT SATURN $54.95 The Saturn pumps out another killer title. Every wrestling fan needs this game. Enough said ! Tombstones, pyle drivers, head rips, Jeffrey, Wolf . . .



DEAD OR ALIVE IMPORT SATURN $59.95 "WANTED" ~ And Dropped for a U.S. release ! ! ! ! !



FATAL FURY REAL BOUT SPECIAL IMPORT The best 2D Fighter next to King of 97. SNK knows how to tickle are fighting bone. The personalities they create in these games will last for all eternity. **$73.95** *B. Ram compatible.*



KING OF THE FIGHTERS 97 IMPORT SATURN Better pick this baby up while you can. You know the infamous SNK Saturn routine. Let's hope they don't follow suit with this puppy. **$56.95** game only



SAKURA WARS 2 IMPORT SATURN $67.95 Unreal, unreal, unreal. One of my favorite games of all time was SW1. There is something unexplainable about that game, you just cant stop playing it, check out our special on SW1 this month $39.95. SW2 is all rendered, modeled strategy heaven revisited ! ! !



GUN GRIFFON 2 IMPORT SATURN $63.95 Remember Gun Griffon on the U.S. Saturn ? The import sequel is here ! Enhanced, polished, tight, mech warfare carnage flair!!



SHIROKI MAJO IMPORT SATURN $62.95 Falcom - Kings of mystical good feeling Rpg's and Hudson Soft - Kings of multi-genre game development, bring to us a nice little treat. Similar to Breath of Fire, Grandia, and Alundra, S. Majo has that old Y's, PC Engine feel.



POCKET FIGHTER IMPORT SATURN Now you will truly know NOW what Ken was like as a child ~ ONE BAD _ _ _ MO FO ! Enjoy the pocket brawl. **$62.95**



SOLO CRISIS IMPORT SATURN $39.95 Never done before ! ! ! Imagine a strategy game with a similar engine to FF tactics, but with a multi-sided playfield ! Action on top and bottom ! Simply flip the world and your in!!!!!!! Quintet nice job !!)



D2 IMPORT SATURN OK, Mr. Kenji Eno, don't keep us guessing forever. We have been waiting much to long for this game. Is it on the Saturn or the Playstation, and when, when, when ??? We promise GC will keep all of our customers posted with the details. Call !



DRAGON BALL Z LEGENDS $45.95 DBZ we love you !



BLACK MATRIX IMPORT SATURN This particular title reminds me of Grandia, Landstalker, Light Crusader, Orge Battle, Final Fantasy tactics, Popolocrois, Sakura Wars, OK, OK, I will stop. Hey were excited, games like this are still the best. **$62.95**



THUNDER FORCE 5 IMPORT SATURN $63.95 Right now, no shooter on the Saturn can compare to TF5 in the side scroll shooter realm. I mean nothing. Even if you hate shooters, buy it, you will become an instant lover . . .



SILOWHETTE MIRAGE IMPORT SATURN $58.95 Where's the U.S. version ? ? ? Treasures killer action shooter still going strong. If you want mind numbing animated difficult carnage gallore then here is your title. The action NEVER stops !!!!



METAL SLUG 2 IMPORT SATURN $67.95 All the comedy, blood, noise and bullet spray of the original !!!!!!!!! BUT BETTER. MS2 coming this Summer.



XMEN VS STREET-FIGHTER IMPORT SATURN The most popular video game we have ever carried. Got your copy yet ? **$69.95**



CYBERBOTS IMPORT SATURN $67.95 Never coming to the U.S. !!!!!! Capcom's 2D mech fighter xtravaganza ! Buy it today !

GAME CAVE

Everything for the gaming enthusiast!



FINAL FANTASY 7 MUSIC ENTHUSIASTS PACKAGE Get the FF7 original 4 disc set with FF7 Reunion music CD **$72.95**



FINAL FANTASY MUSIC AND ACTION FIGURE SPECIAL
Get FF grand finale music CD with your choice of either Aerith, Vincent or Sephiroth FF7 action figures. **$33.95**



OFFICIAL CAPCOM SFA2 COLLECTOR FIGURES Sakura and Chun Li 11" babes , very limited, impeccable detail and quality, made of high quality vinyl. **$79.95**

WALL SCROLLS

Surround yourself with insane anime and game related wall scrolls. Complete your favorite series collection. Game Cave carries multiple scrolls from your favorite series. **ENJOY!**



GHOST IN THE SHELL # 6 $17.95



GHOST IN THE SHELL # 2 $19.95



GHOST IN THE SHELL # 3 $19.95



GHOST IN THE SHELL # 5 $19.95



X # 1 $19.95



MACROSS LYN MINMAY # 2 $17.95



FF 7 AERITH $19.95



FF 7 CLOUD $19.95



RANMA 1 / 2 # 5 $17.95



RANMA 1 / 2 # 4 $17.95



RANMA 1 / 2 # 10 $17.95



RANMA 1 / 2 # 9 $19.95



EVANGELION # 4 $19.95



EVANGELION # 7 $19.95



EVANGELION # 14 $19.95



EVANGELION # 7 $19.95



SAILOR MOON #2 $19.95



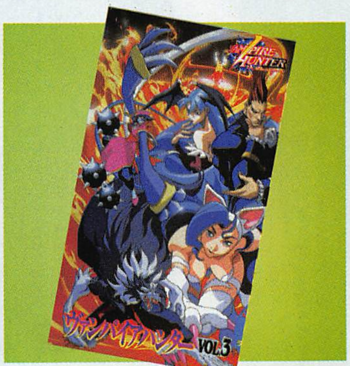
SAILOR MOON # 15 $19.95



DRAGON BALL Z # 2 $17.95



DRAGON BALL Z # 20 $17.95



VAMPIRE HUNTER ANIME CAPCOM EXTRAVAGANZA SPECIAL
Receive **$5 OFF** your purchase when ever you order Vampire Hunter anime Vol. 3 and any other Capcom products, music, anime, games or books.



AKIRA T SHIRTS $17.95

DRAGON BALL Z / RANMA 1 / 2 / TENCHI MUYO T SHIRTS $12.95

AH MY GODDESS! T SHIRTS $17.95

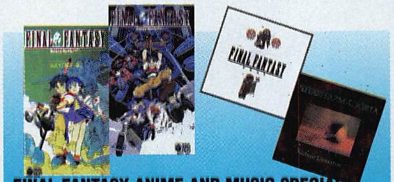
GHOST IN THE SHELL T SHIRTS $17.95



MACROSS PLUS FANS SPECIAL
Get the whole collection Macross plus Vol. 1, Macross plus Vol.2, Macross plus fans only, and Macross plus Sharon Apple music CD's for one insane price **$66.95**



FINAL FANTASY KEY CHAIN SPECIAL
Purchase any FF7 new series key chain and any FF music CD's and Receive **$5 off** your order.



FINAL FANTASY ANIME AND MUSIC SPECIAL
Purchase any volume of FF anime and any Square music CD's and Receive **$5 off** your order.



EVANGELION ANIME AND MUSIC SPECIAL
Purchase any volume of Eva anime and pick any volume of Eva music **$43.95**

FINAL FANTASY VII
ファイナルファンタジーVII

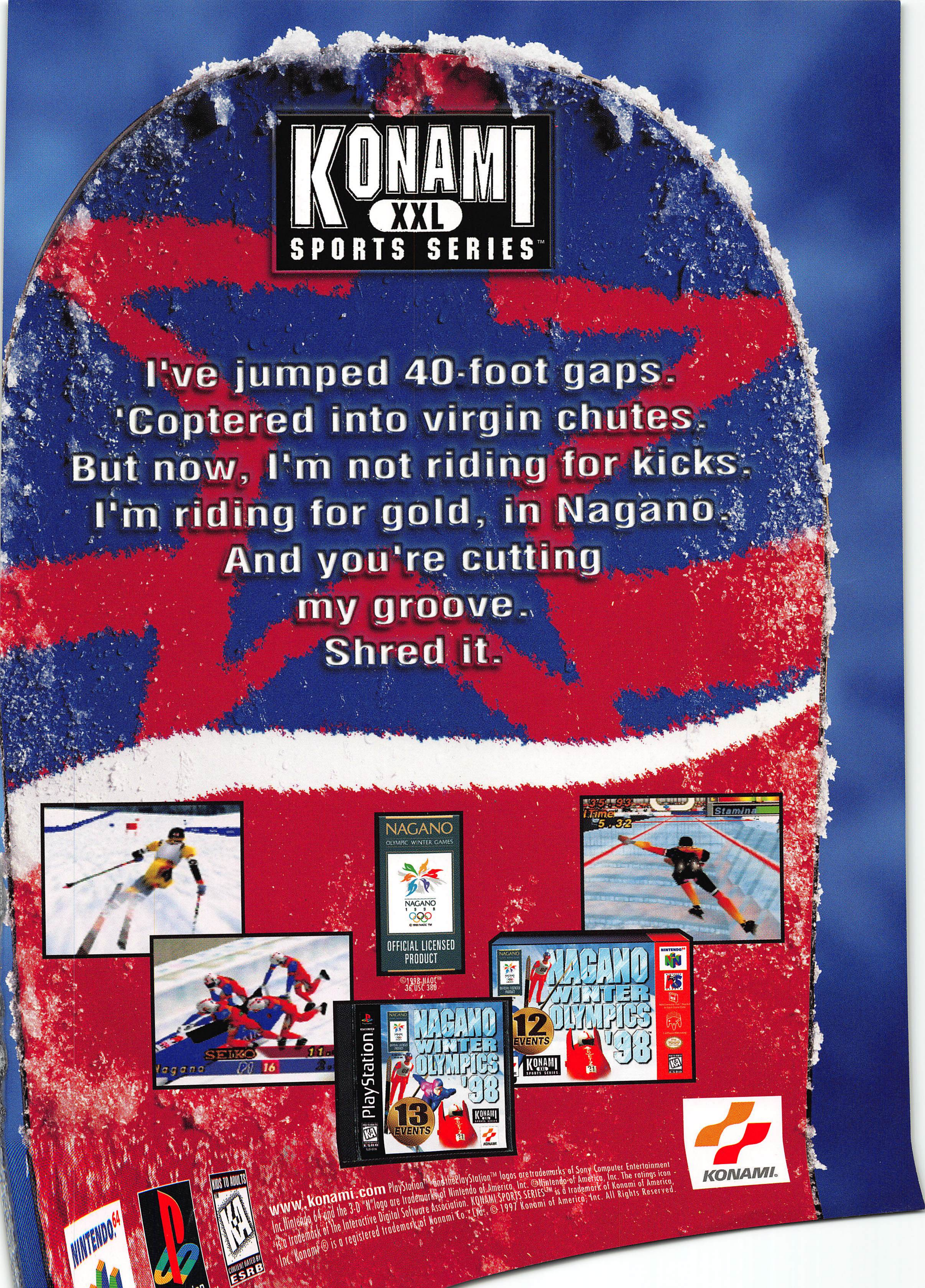
FINAL FANTASY 7 FAVORITE WALLSCROLL SPECIAL
Final Fantasy 7 wall scroll favorites pack, will get you all 3 of the top sellers for one special price **$53.95**

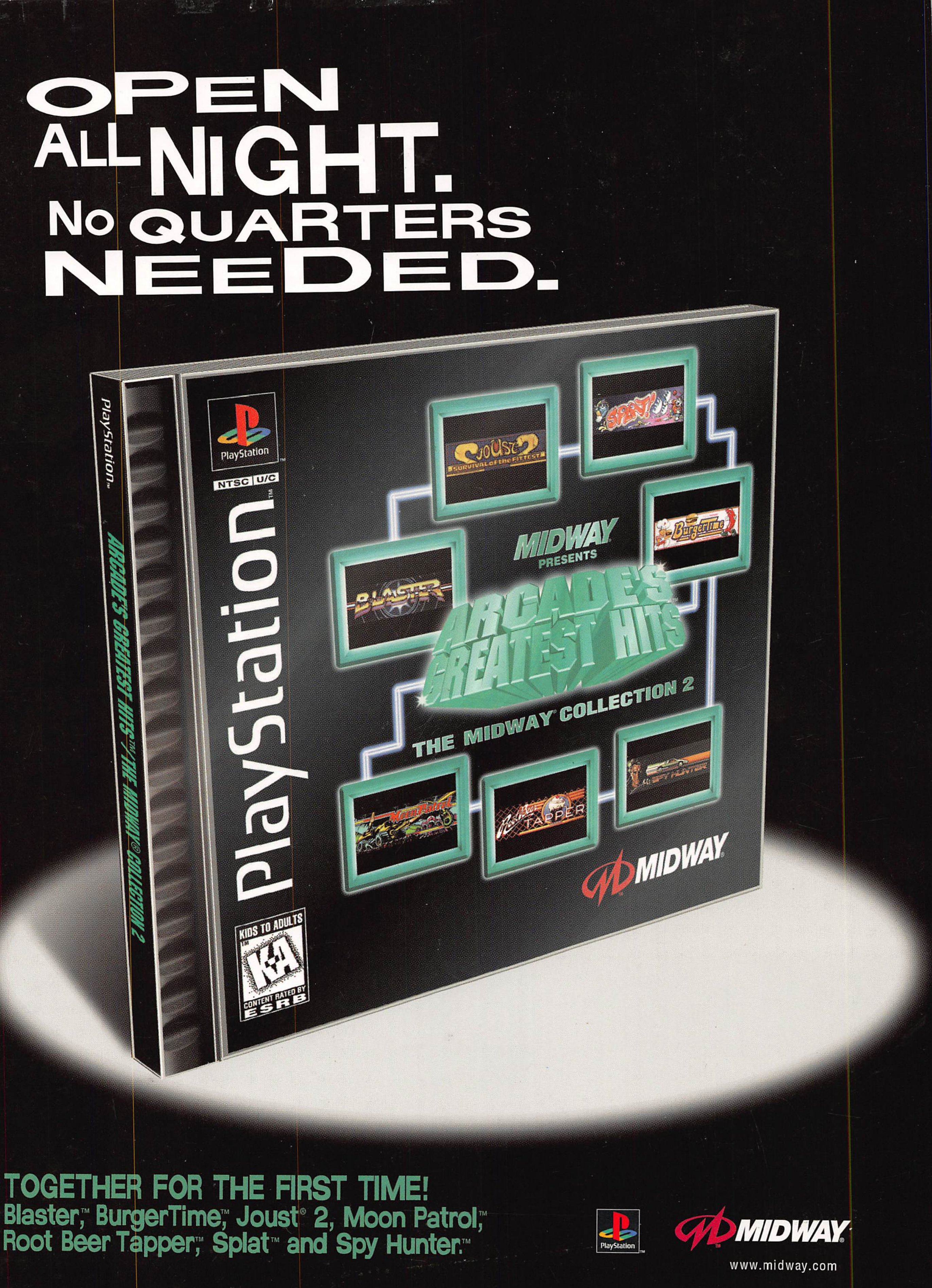
GAME CAVE

Everything for the gaming enthusiast!

SPECIALS ARE LIMITED TO STOCK ON HAND, AND IN MOST CASES QUANTITIES ARE LIMITED. ARTWORK COPYRIGHT THEIR RESPECTIVE COMPANIES. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. IMPORT PLAYSTATION GAMES ARE NOT COMPATIBLE WITH NEWER SYSTEMS, CALL FOR INFO. SHIPPING AND HANDLING ARE EXTRA. CALL FOR CURRENT PRICES. PRICES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. RETURNS ARE SUBJECT TO A RE-STOCK FEE.




KONAMI
XXL
SPORTS SERIES™
I've jumped 40-foot gaps.
'Coptered into virgin chutes.
But now, I'm not riding for kicks.
I'm riding for gold, in Nagano.
And you're cutting
my groove.
Shred it.
NAGANO
OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES
OFFICIAL LICENSED PRODUCT
©1998 NAOC™
36 USC 380
NAGANO WINTER OLYMPICS '98
12 EVENTS
13 EVENTS
PlayStation
KONAMI
www.konami.com PlayStation™ and the PlayStation™ logos are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Nintendo 64 and the 3-D "N" logo are trademarks of Nintendo of America, Inc. ©Nintendo of America, Inc. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. KONAMI SPORTS SERIES™ is a trademark of Konami of America, Inc. Konami ® is a registered trademark of Konami Co., Ltd. © 1997 Konami of America, Inc. All Rights Reserved.



OPEN ALL NIGHT. No QUARTERS NEEDED.
PlayStation
NTSC U/C
PlayStation
MIDWAY PRESENTS
ARCADE'S GREATEST HITS
THE MIDWAY COLLECTION 2
MIDWAY
KIDS TO ADULTS
K-A
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ARCADE'S GREATEST HITS / THE MIDWAY COLLECTION 2
TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME!
Blaster,™ BurgerTime,™ Joust® 2, Moon Patrol,™ Root Beer Tapper,™ Splat™ and Spy Hunter.™
PlayStation
MIDWAY
www.midway.com